

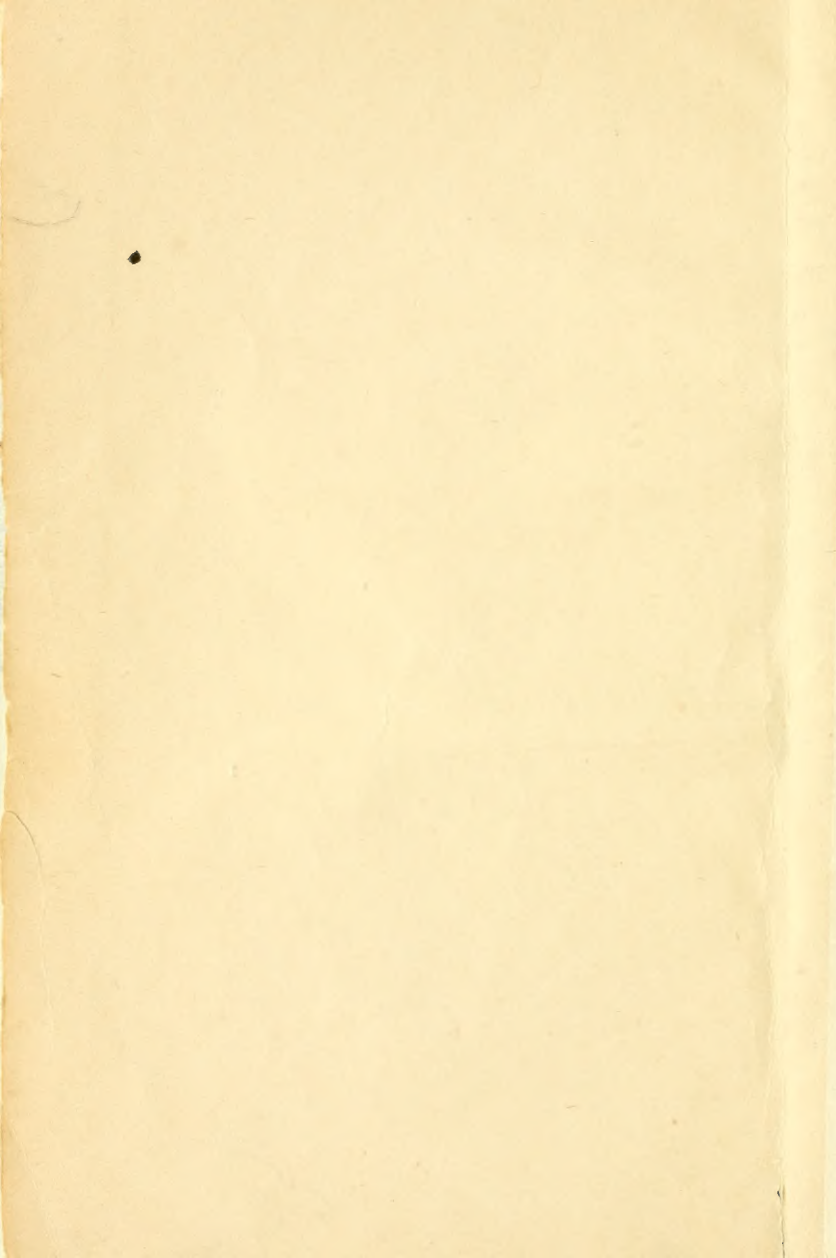




Joanne Thibault

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**A HISTORY OF FRENCH  
LITERATURE**



**A HISTORY OF  
FRENCH LITERATURE**

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BOOK I

PERIOD OF TRANSITION  
THE REVOLUTIONARY AND  
NAPOLEONIC AGE  
1789-1815



# A HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

### CHAPTER I

#### THE LITERATURE OF THE REVOLUTION

THE Revolution and the Empire were each in its own way periods of intense political activity on the one hand and of literary exhaustion on the other. One might have expected that great upheavals like the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars would have either suspended all literary production or else broken entirely with tradition and created an entirely new literature. Neither of these possibilities was realized : in all branches of literature the output was considerable, but if we except André Chénier, it was, in the main, of a mediocre kind, running placidly on stereotyped pseudo-classical lines. In fact, the immediate effect of the Revolution and the Empire was to retard the Romantic movement heralded by the works of Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre ; nevertheless, when the belated movement came, it came enriched by the vitalizing ideas and events which had formed the web of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods.

From one point of view the Revolution was the practical result of the theories of the free-thinking philosophers of the eighteenth century. The gods of the revolutionists were

## 4 A HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE

Voltaire and Rousseau : when it was a question of destruction, they turned to Voltaire, the hater of all tradition and authority ; when a question of reconstruction, they turned to Rousseau, the preacher of equality and of mutual dependence. Guinguené proposed that Voltaire's statue should bear the inscription : "Au destructeur de la superstition," and Jean-Jacques' : "Au fondateur de la liberté." Brandes points out that "there is scarcely a paragraph in the *Contrat Social* which, during the revolutionary period, did not reappear either in a law or a public declaration, or a newspaper article, or a speech in the National Assembly, or in the very constitution of the Republic itself."<sup>1</sup>

The social upheaval was attended by a transformation of ideas, feelings, manners, and taste, but it was some time before it brought about a corresponding literary revolution. The reasons are not far to seek : the Revolution diverted all the best forces of the nation into political channels, and the two great despotisms which immediately succeeded it—the Consulate and the Empire—though they upheld the principles of equality and fraternity, annihilated personal liberty. A strict censorship of the press and Napoleon's endeavour to absorb all the most gifted men in administrative or military pursuits also had the effect of discouraging and impoverishing literature.

The only interesting forms of literature—if such they may be called—produced during the revolutionary period were political oratory and political journalism.

Chateaubriand's remark, "L'éloquence est un fruit des révolutions ; elle y croît spontanément et sans culture," is amply justified by the eloquent speeches declaimed at successive revolutionary assemblies by Mirabeau (1749-1791), Vergniaud (1753-1793), Danton (1759-1794), and Robespierre (1758-1794), to mention only the four most gifted of the many orators of the Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Brandes : *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature : The Reaction in France*, p. 18 (Heinemann, 1903).



Of these, Mirabeau—"l'ami des hommes," as he was called—was the greatest. From the day when he defiantly told Louis XVI's emissary, "Nous sommes ici par la volonté du peuple, on ne nous en arrachera que par la force des baïonnettes," to the day of his death he swayed his audiences by his natural eloquence, the pitilessness of his logic, and the accuracy of his information. (Cf. *Discours contre la banqueroute; Sur le Droit de paix et de guerre.*)

Mirabeau  
(1749-1791)

Vergniaud, who is the best representative of the eloquence of the Girondists, had none of Mirabeau's accurate knowledge and little of his logic. He was an emotional and fluent speaker, easily carried away by his own words, and fond of repeating his effects. A past-master in the art of waxing eloquent over general ideas and feelings of a rather superficial kind, none knew better than he how to make glowing appeals to the patriotism of his hearers or to defend his own party against accusations.

Danton, who was nicknamed by his contemporaries "le Mirabeau de la populace," and who lost his head for his opposition to Robespierre, was an impetuous speaker who always went straight to the point, disdaining vague generalities and flowers of rhetoric. His famous address to the Legislative Assembly in 1792, when news had come of the siege of Verdun by the Prussians and when the Allies were hourly expected at the gates of Paris, is a good example of the electric quality of his improvisations: "Le tocsin qu'on va sonner n'est point un signal d'alarme, c'est la charge sur les ennemis de la patrie. Pour les vaincre, Messieurs, il nous faut de l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace, et la France est sauvée."

Danton  
(1759-1794)

Robespierre was as rhetorical as Danton was direct and simple—his speeches often have a sentimental note which he had caught from Rousseau; they are admirably composed, and convince without persuading. (Cf. his accusation of the

Robespierre  
(1758-1794)

cf. la grande  
œuvre

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Girondins, May 31, 1793, and his speech in his own defence, July 26, 1794.)

None of these orators is remarkable for the originality of his ideas, which were drawn almost exclusively from the *encyclopédistes* and from Voltaire and Rousseau. Filled with the rationalistic ideas and the sentimental humanitarianism which in the eighteenth century had passed for philosophy, most of them were too fond of abstractions based on insufficient data, while their classical training had taught them to use and abuse classical and mythological allusions, and to strew their speeches with rhetorical *clichés*. In spite of these besetting sins, however, the oratory of the Revolution is redeemed by its fundamental sincerity and its youthful ardour. The majority of the public speakers of the period were in their thirties, and even those who were older had not lost the enthusiasm and the optimism of youth ready to believe that Rome can be built in a day.

The last great orator of the Revolution was Napoleon.

Napoleon  
(1769-1821)

After the 8th of Brumaire his voice alone was heard. His speeches were always concise, even brusque, very expressive of his personality, and admirably suited to the psychology of a crowd. In his addresses to his soldiers, there is never a word too much, and the opening and closing sentences are of a kind that would engrave themselves on the simplest minds.

Political journalism does not belong to literature proper, but it may be noted here that its power dates

2. Political  
Journalism

from the Revolution. The periodical press of the *ancien régime* had mainly taken the form of literary, scientific, and religious reviews, in which politics played an unimportant part. One of the articles of the

Development  
of the daily  
press

Declaration of the Rights of Man provided for the liberty of the press, and the result was an immediate outcrop of political dailies of every shade of opinion. Only two of these newspapers outlived the revolutionary period: *Le Moniteur* which, after 1803, under the title *La Décade Philosophique*, became the

official organ of publicity, and *Le Journal des Débats*, founded 1789, which has survived to the present day. The daily press may have no literary value in itself, but as M. Lanson points out, throughout the nineteenth century it influenced the reading public and hence modified the methods of writers themselves. "Le journal est le véritable héritier des salons pour la direction du goût littéraire":<sup>1</sup> the average reader is influenced by his daily paper, reads the books and goes to the plays it recommends. Moreover, the newspaper develops a tendency to quick and superficial reading and a demand for novelty and realistic detail, with the result that modern writers eager for popularity have increasingly modified their methods on these lines. This, however, takes us far from the days of the Revolution, when the daily press was too much engrossed in political and social problems to have room for literary criticism, the *feuilleton*, or the *fait divers*.

Among the most distinguished pamphleteers and journalists of this period were the Abbé Siéyès and Camille Desmoulins.

It was the Abbé Siéyès (1748-1836) who in his pamphlet, "*Qu'est-ce que le tiers Etat*," anticipated the Constitution of '89. "*Qu'est-ce que le tiers état? La nation.—Qu'est-il? Rien.—Que doit-il être? Tout.*"

But the most talented and original of the journalists proper, and the best prose-writer of the Revolution was Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794), secretary to Danton and editor of *Le Vieux Cordelier*, in the pages of which he eloquently and caustically opposed the Terror and all its ways, with the result that he perished under the guillotine side by side with Danton. With the advent of Napoleon, oratory and journalism were extinguished, except in a purely official sense.

<sup>1</sup> Lanson: *Histoire de la Littérature française*.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LITERATURE OF THE CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE, 1799-1815

#### I. THE PSEUDO-CLASSICAL SCHOOL

**I**N the literature of the period of which Napoleon was the dominating figure two currents may be distinguished—the one continuing the eighteenth-century tradition, the other representing a reaction against that tradition.

In the eighteenth century literature had become so much a social and political weapon that it had almost ceased to be an art. It is true that in the years immediately preceding the Revolution pure literature had begun to assert its rights and the air had been full of protest against the classical doctrine, but the fact that the revolutionists themselves introduced the ideals of ancient Athens and Rome into politics stimulated a reaction towards classicism in literature. Under the rule of Napoleon, whose arbitrary nature made him jealous of new ideas and of intellectual independence, literature was deprived of its militant function. At the same time his dreams of world conquest were nourished by memories of the Roman Empire, just as his policy was based on that love of organization and order for which Rome stands pre-eminent in the history of ancient civilization. The result on art was the so-called style of the Empire—a form of pseudo-classicism which characterizes the architecture, painting, sculpture, and furniture of this period, and was not without its influence on literature.



During the Revolution the theatre had rivalled the press and the tribune as a means of political propaganda. The tragic dramatists, of whom the most famous are Marie Joseph Chénier (1764-1811), André's brother, Lemercier and Legouvé, followed Voltaire's example in making their plays a vehicle for the discussion of political problems, choosing such subjects from Roman or French history as lent themselves to allusions to the situation of the moment. Thus M. J. Chénier's *Charles IX* (1789) is an attack on royalty and religious fanaticism, his *Gracchus* (1792) a defence of liberty, while in *Fénélon ou les Religieuses de Cambrai* (1793) he makes his archbishop hero the incarnation of tolerance and humanity. Much the same tradition, less the allusions—of which Napoleon would have none—and with an increasing tendency towards the melodramatic, prevailed under the Empire. Typical examples are *Les Templiers* (1805) by Raynouard, and Luce de Lanceval's *Hector* (1809).

The comedy of this period, if we except the topical plays of the Revolution which have only a documentary value, deserves greater praise than the tragedy. The best of these comedies are *Le Trésor* (1804) by Andrieux, *La Petite Ville* (1801) and *Les Ricochets* (1807) by Picard, and *Les Deux Gendres* (1810) by Etienne. The serious drama is represented by Alexandre Duval, whose *Edouard en Ecosse ou la nuit d'un proscrit* (1802) was received with enthusiastic applause; while Guilbert de Pixérécourt, nicknamed "le Corneille des Boulevards," with his melodramas, classical in form but highly romantic in content, unconsciously prepared the way for the romantic drama.

The descriptive and didactic poetry of the eighteenth century continued on its lifeless and laboured way. The Abbé Delille, the translator of Milton and Pope, whose *Jardins* (1702) have already been noticed, produced successively *L'Homme des Champs* (1802), *Le Malheur et la Pitié* (1803)—an attack on the excesses of

the Revolution—and *Les Trois Règles de la Nature* (1809). Florian wrote his *Fables* (1792), which, though far inferior to La Fontaine's, are pleasantly told. The patriotic note is struck in M. J. Chénier's *Chanson du Départ*, and in the famous *Marseillaise* (1792), composed for the army of the Rhine by Rouget de Lisle. It originally bore the title *Chant de Guerre de l'Armée du Rhin*, but as the soldiers of Marseilles were the first to sing it in Paris, it was re-christened, and has ever since been known as *La Marseillaise*.

Among the elegiac poets we find a presentiment of Lamartine's lyrical innovations in *La Chute des Feuilles* and *Le Poète Mourant* by Millevoye (1782–1816), and in Chênedollé's *Études poétiques* (published in 1820, the same year as Lamartine's *Méditations* but written much earlier), while Baour-Lormian's *Poésies Ossianiques* (1801), an adaptation of Macpherson's forgeries, had a great influence on contemporary taste and subsequently on literature.

The conservatism in art which is the distinguishing feature of the Consulate and the Empire is clearly reflected in the literary criticism of the day. In 1799 La Harpe published the nine volumes of his *Cours de Littérature*, consisting of the lectures he had delivered at the Lycée during the preceding twelve years, and which were intended not for the learned but for men and women of general culture. The book, the first of its kind, was received with great favour, and immediately ran into several editions. It declared the superiority of Latin over Greek literature, and taught that, in spite of Racine, the great Classical Age, fine as it was, paled before the literary performances of the Age of Enlightenment, which La Harpe regarded as a golden era both in verse and in prose!

In the pages of *Le Journal des Débats*, for the moment re-christened *Journal de l'Empire*, the organ of official criticism, Boissonnade, Geoffroy, Feletz, and Dussault wrote in the same reactionary spirit. These classical diehards by no means shared all La Harpe's views, and held no brief for eighteenth-century literature, but they were all devotees

### 3. Literary criticism

of the classical doctrine, and believed, as Geoffroy expressed it, not only that "le théâtre français est un théâtre classique : on n'y doit rire et pleurer que dans les règles," but also that no form of literature should overstep the narrow circle traced for it once for all by dogmatic theorists.

## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE OF THE CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE (*continued*)

#### II. REACTION AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

SIDE by side with these pseudo-classicists there existed at this period a small group of writers—Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël, Senancour, Benjamin Constant and Barante, who were all opposed to the Napoleonic autocracy and to the prevailing order of things. In his *Main Currents of Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Brandes groups these writers in a volume entitled *Emigrant Literature* because, owing to their independent views, they were all at one point or another of their careers exiles, either on their own initiative or at the bidding of Napoleon. Their work and thought reveal a curious blending of reactionary and progressive ideas: their point of contact with the eighteenth century is seen in the war they wage against outworn tradition, some of them in all domains, others only in that of literature. On the other hand, they are in open revolt against the eighteenth century's irreligious attitude and its lack of historical sense, and, true disciples of Rousseau, they react against its suppression of feeling and imagination and its conventional and colourless view of nature.

The two writers who for their originality and their literary gifts tower above all the others during the period of the Consulate and the Empire are Madame de Staël and Chateaubriand.

Anne Marie Germaine Necker was the daughter of the great Genevese banker and financier who, shortly before the outbreak of the Revolution, became Prime Minister of France. She was born in Paris, and from her eleventh year onwards was a prominent little figure in her mother's salon, which was frequented by the most brilliant men of the day, including Grimm, Buffon, Marmontel, and La Harpe. At eighteen she published her *Lettres sur J.-J. Rousseau*, of whom she had for many years been an enthusiastic reader. Two years later she was married to Baron de Staël-Holstein, the Swedish Ambassador in Paris. Her marriage was not a happy one, and she sought diversion by throwing herself heart and soul into literature and politics. When the Revolution broke out Necker was soon forced to flee, but his daughter remained in Paris, and through the influence of her husband was able to rescue many an innocent victim of the Reign of Terror. Finally, in 1792, she herself was forced to flee the vengeance of the revolutionary leaders, and she sought refuge on her father's country estate at Coppet near Geneva. Five years later she returned to Paris and opened a salon in the Rue du Bac, which soon became the great political rendezvous of the Moderates, with Benjamin Constant at their head. Madame de Staël's independence of mind, her influence, her antagonism to Bonaparte, who is reported to have said that every one thought less of him after he had talked with her, led in 1803 to her banishment from Paris by express command of the First Consul.

No greater punishment could have fallen on Madame de Staël, who would certainly have agreed with the dictum "On ne vit qu'à Paris, on végète ailleurs," so ill could she dispense with intellectual intercourse and a certain participation in political events. Rather than vegetate elsewhere, however, she spent most of her ten years of exile in foreign travel. On leaving Paris she went straight to Weimar, where she made the acquaintance of Schiller and Goethe, with whom she had long literary discussions,



and whom she somewhat wearied by her endless intelligent questions. From Weimar she proceeded to Berlin, where she obtained an introduction to Fichte who at her request expounded his philosophical system to her in a quarter of an hour. Recalled to Coppet to nurse her dying father, she carried off A. W. Schlegel, the great German romantic critic and translator of Shakespeare, as travelling companion and tutor to her sons.

The following year Madame de Staël travelled in Italy, studying its art, literature, and customs in company with Schlegel. Then she returned to Coppet, and full of the impressions she had absorbed wrote *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1806). In 1807 she was once more in Germany; after revisiting Weimar she proceeded to Munich and Vienna, and on her return to Switzerland set to work upon her great book *De l'Allemagne*, the record of the ideas and impressions she had gained from her two visits to Germany. The book was barely through the press when it was seized by the police, and all the copies destroyed, on the grounds that the work was not French, and that France was not yet reduced to seeking models among the Germans. This time Madame de Staël was banished, not merely from Paris, but from France itself, and was bidden to consider herself a prisoner at Coppet, where it was intimated to her friends they would be committing a grave political offence if they visited her. Schlegel, who had been tutor to her children for eight years, was ordered to leave Coppet on the pretext that he influenced her against France. Maddened by the isolation to which she was condemned, Madame de Staël resolved to flee from Coppet. She and her daughter succeeded in reaching Vienna without passports. On the Russian frontier she was joined by her second husband, Albert de Rocca, a young Swiss officer whom she had secretly married a few years previously. After spending some time in Moscow and St. Petersburg (Petrograd), they proceeded via Sweden, to England, where *De l'Allemagne* was successfully published in 1813. A second tour in Italy followed, and after the downfall of Napoleon, she returned



to Paris, where her salon once more became a centre of intellectual activity. She spent the last two years of her life editing her *Considérations sur la Révolution française* and *Dix Années d'Exil*, both published posthumously.

Madame de Staël's works fall naturally into three groups : her political writings, which do not concern us here ; her novels ; and her critical works.

Madame de Staël was as emotional as she was intellectual, and her whole personality is reflected in  
 1. Novels her two highly sentimental novels, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1807), both of which are largely autobiographical. Their two heroines are superior beings in conflict with their environment—*Delphine*, in virtue of her pure self-sacrificing nature, bows before public opinion ; *Corinne*, the poetess, defies it, but neither of them finds happiness. In spite of its overwrought sentiment and declamatory style, reminiscent of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which inspired it and to which it owes its epistolary form, *Delphine* is interesting because of the war it wages on those social conventions and prejudices which are more binding than any laws. *Corinne ou l'Italie*, the novel of a misunderstood woman, has apart from its plot the added interest of an Italian setting, and digressions on Italian art and literature. Moreover, the book is a study of national peculiarities and limitations : the prejudices and characteristics of Englishmen are represented in Oswald, Lord Nevil, *Corinne*'s unhappy lover ; of Italians in the Prince of Castel Forte, Oswald's unsuccessful rival ; of Frenchmen in d'Erfeuil, his travelling companion, and in Madame de Staël's own reflections and comments. The three nations are confronted and compared with no little penetration by the authoress and by *Corinne*, who is the offspring of a Roman father and an English mother.

Madame de Staël's cosmopolitan tendencies are even more strongly marked in her two excursions into literary criticism—*De la Littérature* (1800) and *De l'Allemagne* (1813).

2. Critical works

In *De la Littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*, to give it its full title, Madame de Staël shows herself to be a true daughter of the eighteenth century, on whose ideas she had been brought up, for the whole book is based upon the idea of perfectibility, the assumption that there is a necessary and continuous progress in all human affairs. Applied to art or literature this idea is, as we have seen, a fallacy, and in this case it does much to vitiate an otherwise admirable book, for it forces Madame de Staël to regard the literature of each succeeding age as superior to that of the age which had preceded it. On the other hand, by striving to prove the intimate connection which exists between the political and social life of a nation and its literature, she is the inaugurator of a new method of literary criticism, which, instead of basing its judgments on a fixed and absolute standard of taste (cf. Boileau and La Harpe) in criticizing any given literary work, takes into consideration the age and social and historical environment in which it was written: "Je me suis proposé d'examiner," she writes in her preface, "quelle est l'influence de la religion, des mœurs et des lois sur la littérature, et quelle est l'influence de la littérature sur la religion, les mœurs et les lois." In a word, Madame de Staël is the Montesquieu of literary criticism. In the second part of the book she maintains the thesis that the new, free, social conditions brought about by the Revolution must inevitably bring into being a new literature unshackled by rules, and she points to northern literature—English, German, and Scandinavian—as an unplumbed source of poetry and idealism.

Germany, in particular, seemed to Madame de Staël most capable of helping France to create a new literature, and it was in order to make German literature and the

German mentality known to France that she wrote her most influential book, *De l'Allemagne*, which is divided as follows: (1) *L'Allemagne et des mœurs des Allemands* (twenty chapters);

*De la Littérature*  
(1800)

*De l'Allemagne*  
(1813)

(2) *De la Littérature et des Arts* (thirty-two chapters), a brief survey of the chief periods of German literature with a more detailed study of the works of Wieland, Klopstock, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and Herder; (3) *La philosophie et la morale*, a clear exposition of the German philosophical movement from Kant to Schelling (twenty-one chapters); (4) *La Religion et l'Enthousiasme* (twelve chapters), which she regards as the essential characteristics of the German national character, and which she would fain see cultivated in her native land, where she is convinced that they would give new life to thought and poetry. In *De l'Allemagne* Madame de Staël renounces the eighteenth-century sensationalism which had inspired her earlier work, and adopts the philosophy of Kant and Fichte with its belief in the spirit's independence of the world of matter. The book is strewn with suggestive and often illuminating comparisons between the national characteristics of the French and the Germans, and between their respective attitudes towards life and art. Goethe, in his old age, remarked that *De l'Allemagne* was like a big gun which had made a breach in the Chinese wall of prejudice and indifference concealing Germany from France. It is true that there had been no lack of literary relations between the two countries during the first half of the eighteenth century, but between 1753, when Voltaire left Berlin for ever, and the first years of the nineteenth century, Germany had become an intellectual force, and had within the space of a generation produced a national literature worthy to rank with that of any other nation in Europe. All this was for the first time fully revealed to the French by Madame de Staël, and, as we shall see, the revelation had no small share in breaking the classical tradition.

It has often been remarked that intellectually Madame de Staël belongs to the eighteenth century and emotionally to the nineteenth. Roughly speaking, this is true. Her greatest pleasure was intellectual intercourse and conversation, for which she appears to have had a remarkable gift. "Si

Madame de Staël a link between the Age of Enlightenment and the Romantic Age

j'étais reine," one of her admirers is said to have remarked, "j'ordonnerais à Madame de Staël de me parler toujours." Even the natural beauty of Coppet was no balm for her aching longing for Paris and all its intellectual delights. Her ideas, too, she inherited from the Age of Enlightenment, her intellectualism, and her belief in progress and in the indefinite perfectibility of man and all his works.

It has been seen how strong was the cosmopolitan tendency of the eighteenth century. Madame de Staël wears her cosmopolitanism with a difference, or rather she has no need to wear it, for it is an intrinsic part of her nature. While her predecessors had taken this or that foreign idea or tendency because it fitted in with their general scheme of life, she is interested in other nations for their own sake and primarily in those characteristics which differentiate them from her own. Her rôle, as M. Lanson puts it, was to understand and to make others understand. In other ways, too, her work reveals many romantic traits. She was an individualist to the finger-tips: the principal characters of her novels are thoroughly self-centred and introspective, and are obsessed and oppressed by a sense of fatality which gives them no peace. They thus live in a moral isolation which makes them an easy prey to that *mal du siècle* which was to continue to work such havoc among the young romantic heroes of a later date. She was one of the first to understand that the modern mind is haunted and troubled by the infinite. This thought appears again and again in her remarks about German poetry. "Le sentiment de l'infini est le véritable attribut de l'âme." What particularly appeals to Madame de Staël in northern literature is its melancholy, its dreaminess, its vague suggestiveness.

"L'on ne dit en français que ce que l'on veut dire et l'on ne voit point errer autour des paroles ces images à mille formes qui entourent la poésie des langues du Nord et réveillent une foule de souvenirs."<sup>1</sup>

And again:

<sup>1</sup> *De l'Allemagne*, II, 9.



"La poésie est une possession momentanée de tout ce que notre âme souhaite."<sup>1</sup>

And she is convinced that she is not preaching to deaf ears, for as she remarks in her preface to *Delphine*, the ideas that she holds to be good and true are addressed to "la France éclairée mais silencieuse, à l'avenir plutôt qu'au présent."

"Chateaubriand est le père du romantisme," says Sainte-Beuve, "Jean-Jacques le grand-père, Bernardin l'oncle, et un oncle arrivé des Indes exprès pour cela." One would be justified in adding, "Et Madame de Staël la tante et une tante venue d'Allemagne exprès pour cela."

While Madame de Staël was theorizing and setting people thinking, her contemporary, Chateaubriand, was busy firing their imaginations.

François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) belonged to

**CHATEAU-  
BRIAND**  
(1768-1848)

a younger branch of an old Breton family, and was born at Saint-Malo the same year as Napoleon. His stern upbringing, coupled with a

passionate imaginative temperament, made him long for the day when he should be his own master, and in the meantime

Life and works

induced in him an overwhelming desire for solitude, which he was only willing to share with his sister Lucile, his one friend and confidante, and a creature as romantic and excitable as himself. Chateaubriand had just obtained a commission in the army and been presented at court when the Revolution broke out. As a cadet of a noble house, brought up in strict conservative views, he had no sympathy with the movement, and in 1791 sailed for North America on adventure bent, with the ostensible pretext of trying to discover the North-West Passage. Needless to say he had neither the information nor the equipment necessary for the purpose. He spent some eight months travelling over the wilder parts of North America, seeing a good deal of native Indian life, and planning his two short tales, *Atala* and *René*. On his return he remained in France just long enough to

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, II, 10.

contract the marriage arranged for him, and then joined the army of the emigrants. Wounded at Thionville, he managed to escape to London, where he remained for seven years (1793-1800), making a precarious living as a teacher and translator, and sketching the stories of *Atala* and *René* under the trees in Kensington Gardens. It was in London that he published his first work, *Essai sur les Révolutions* (1797), an incoherent and contradictory treatise showing great religious scepticism. The death of his mother the following year led him back to Christianity, or, as he himself puts it, "j'ai pleuré et j'ai cru." In 1800 he returned to France, bearing with him the manuscript of his great work, *Le Génie du Christianisme*, the publication of which in 1802 coincided with the Concordat which sealed Bonaparte's reconciliation with the Papacy and marked the restoration of Catholic worship which for nearly ten years had been more or less under a ban in France. The *Moniteur Officiel* of the 14th February, in which Chateaubriand's book was announced, contained also the following proclamation from the pen of Bonaparte :

"Français, du sein d'une Révolution inspirée par l'amour de la patrie éclatèrent tout à coup parmi vous des dissensions religieuses. . . . Français, que cette religion qui a civilisé l'Europe soit encore le lien qui en rapproche les habitants."

The opportune appearance of *Le Génie du Christianisme* brought its author into favour with the First Consul, who made him secretary to the Embassy in Rome, but after the execution of the Duc D'Enghien Chateaubriand resigned his post, and set out on an extended tour in Greece, Turkey, Palestine, North Africa (1806-1807) in search of local colour for *Les Martyrs*, on which he was already engaged. The fruits of this journey are to be found in *Les Martyrs* itself (1809), *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811), and *Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage*, written about 1809, but not published till 1826. From the Bourbon restoration to 1830 Chateaubriand's life was mainly that of a politician. After the fall of Charles X he retired into private life,



and occupied himself with writing his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, which he read aloud in the salon of Madame Récamier, and which he finally sold on condition that they should not be published until after his death.

Though Chateaubriand lived until the Revolution of 1848 all his best work was written between 1801 and 1811 except his vast autobiography, *Les Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, begun under the Empire, and completed a few years before his death, and the delightful *Vie de Rancé* (1844), his swan-song, which deserves to be better known than it is. Chateaubriand is always regarded as the most immediate and most important precursor of French Romanticism, but if Romanticism was from one point of view a thorough-going reaction against classicism, affirming what it denied and denying what it affirmed, then there is nothing to distinguish Chateaubriand from the recognized members of the Romantic group, except that he belonged to the movement before it actually crystallized into a school.

By reason of his emotional temperament, his arrogant egoism, his glowing imagination, and his highly developed sense of beauty, Chateaubriand could scarcely have failed to be in revolt against the eighteenth century and all its teaching, and his earliest published work, *Essai sur les Révolutions anciennes et modernes* (1797), was written to refute the idea of progress or perfectibility. He had no faith in reason, but believed implicitly in feeling and imagination, while the unexplainable and the mysterious appealed to him profoundly.

"Il n'est rien de beau, de doux, de grand dans la vie que les choses mystérieuses."<sup>1</sup>

It was his historical and still more his æsthetic sense which made him so eager to restore the Christian religion generally and Catholicism in particular to that place in art and literature which since the Renaissance had been usurped by pagan mythology, and to reinstate it as a spiritual factor in the

<sup>1</sup> *Le Génie du Christianisme*, I, 2.

life of the nation in the place held during the eighteenth century by "enlightenment" or a vague deism.

*Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802), or as it was originally entitled, *Les Beautés de la religion chrétienne*, is concerned not with the truth of Christianity but with its supreme emotional, imaginative, and artistic value, and is an attempt to prove that this religion is the source and mainspring of all progress in the modern world. The eighteenth century, says Chateaubriand, has insisted that—

"le christianisme était un culte né au sein de la barbarie, absurde dans ses dogmes, ridicule dans ses cérémonies, ennemi des arts et des lettres, de la raison et de la beauté ; un culte qui n'avait fait que verser du sang, enchaîner les hommes et retarder le bonheur et les lumières du genre humain ; on devait donc chercher à prouver au contraire que, de toutes les religions qui ont jamais existé, la religion chrétienne est la plus poétique, la plus humaine, la plus favorable à la liberté, aux arts et aux lettres ; que le monde moderne lui doit tout, depuis l'agriculture jusqu'aux sciences abstraites, depuis les hospices pour les malheureux jusqu'aux temples bâtis par Michel-Ange et décorés par Raphaël."<sup>1</sup>

In support of his belief that as a source of poetical inspiration Christianity is infinitely superior to pagan mythology, Chateaubriand makes a careful examination of some of the great Christian epics—Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*<sup>2</sup> (Part II, 1, i), and later in the book writes some glowing chapters on the literary value of the Bible. In endeavouring to show the beauties of the Christian religion Chateaubriand was led back to the Middle Ages when Christianity had been at the height of its glory, and when it had found its most perfect artistic expression not in books but in churches and cathedrals. Hence he gave a great impetus to the growing interest in Gothic architecture and in all that it stood for.

Not content with proving theoretically that—

"la religion chrétienne est plus favorable que le paganisme au développement des caractères et au jeu des passions, et que le

<sup>1</sup> *Le Génie du Christianisme*, I, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Chateaubriand later translated *Paradise Lost* into French prose.

merveilleux de cette religion peut lutter contre le merveilleux emprunté à la mythologie,"

Chateaubriand proceeded to give a practical demonstration by writing a Christian epic himself, *Les Martyrs*. This prose-poem in twenty-four books, dealing with the persecutions of the early Christians under Diocletian in the third century, is not improved by its epic and supernatural machinery, but as a novel of the ancient world it has great and, for its day, singular merits; idyllic Greece, pagan and Christian Rome, the Gaul of the Franks and Druids are reconstructed for us with extraordinary historical and imaginative skill, and one is not surprised that it was the reading of the famous sixth book of *Les Martyrs* that decided Thierry on his vocation as an historian. The work abounds in those vivid descriptions of natural scenery painted from life, and in that local colour both in time and space which are among Chateaubriand's chief titles to fame.

Even his romances, *Atala*, *René*, and *Le Dernier Abencérage* have a clearly marked religious purpose. Religious tendency in Chateaubriand's romances. The two first were originally intended to form part of *Les Natchez*, which Chateaubriand planned as an "épopée de la nature." They were then introduced into *Le Génie du Christianisme*—*Atala* to illustrate the chapter entitled *Harmonies de la religion chrétienne avec les scènes de la nature et les passions du cœur humain*, and *René* as an illustrative episode to the chapter entitled *Du vague des passions*. The one was detached from the main work before publication, the other after the first edition. In *Atala*, the Red Indian, Chactas, tells his life-story to a young Frenchman, René, of which the central episode is his love for Atala, a young Christian girl, who had saved his life, and for whose sake he was willing to be converted. But Atala, having promised her dying mother to take the veil, refuses to marry him, and, incapable of either breaking or fulfilling her vow, dies by her own hand. In *René*, the Frenchman tells Chactas his story culminating in his dearly-loved sister

forsaking him to become a nun. Again, in *Le Dernier Abencérage*, the plot turns on the conversion of the hero. Nevertheless this intentional religious tendency is the least interesting feature in Chateaubriand's novels, which owe their compelling power to their individualism, their brooding melancholy, and to the way they reflect the influence of nature and natural scenery on the thoughts and feelings of the principal characters.

Chateaubriand was so profoundly interested in his proud and melancholy self that he portrays his own character and temperament in all his heroes. René, his namesake, is the incarnation of that unreasoning and apparently causeless world-weariness reinforced by emotionalism which Chateaubriand shared with so many of his generation, and which is admirably summed up in the closing words of *Atala*: "Homme tu n'es qu'un songe rapide, un rêve douloureux ; tu n'existes que par le malheur ; tu n'es quelque chose que par la tristesse de ton âme et l'éternelle mélancolie de ta pensée." René is the spiritual heir of Werther and Jacopo Ortis, Faust, the ancestor of Childe Harold, Manfred, Olympio, and Rollo, to mention only a few of those mysterious and self-conscious sufferers who were to become such favourite figures in romantic literature.

René, alias Chateaubriand, "enchanté, tourmenté et comme possédé par le démon de son cœur," finds his one consolation in Nature, especially in its grander and lonelier aspects, associating it with his woes and either adoring it for its beauty or cursing it for its indifference. His descriptions of natural scenery are as subjective as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's had been objective, and they have a richness of colour, a glow and a sense of mystery which one would seek in vain in any of his predecessors. Chateaubriand's travels in America, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, Italy, and Spain, undertaken not like Madame de Staël's because he was interested in foreign people and their ideals, but because he was restless and in search of local colour—"J'allais

Chateaubriand's  
self-portraiture

Chateaubriand's  
love of Nature  
and his descrip-  
tions of natural  
scenery



chercher des images, voilà tout," he declares—taught him to see and make others see the beauty of Nature in every aspect and in every clime. His natural descriptions have been characterized as "coloured symphonies," and this brings us to his style, which is concrete, imaginative, and rhythmical to such a marked degree that he is rightly regarded as the founder of modern French prose, for since the days when he moulded it for his three great themes—Christianity, Nature, and M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand—it has never reverted to the dullness and dryness which had characterized it throughout the enlightened eighteenth century.

Three other works which, though by widely different authors, under the Consulate and the Empire herald the Romantic dawn are two novels of disillusionment and despair—Senancour's *Oberman* (1802), and *Adolphe*, published 1816, but written several years earlier by the publicist and statesman, Benjamin Constant, and Barante's *Tableau de la littérature française au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1809), a suggestive retrospective survey and interpretation of eighteenth-century literature as the expression of a state of society for which its author has little good to say. Barante was on intimate terms with Madame de Staël and in disfavour with the Government for his frequent visits to Coppet, and his book is the *pendant* to her *De l'Allemagne*, but instead of being an enthusiastic glance into the future, it is a resigned but highly condemnatory glance into the past, just as Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un Tableau historique du progrès de l'esprit humain* (1794) had been "an act of faith and a song of triumph" for the *Encyclopédie* and all its works.

Before leaving this transitional period it may be well to note some of the tendencies which either had their source in, or were greatly intensified by, the turn of events during the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, and which were to find their full expression in the writers who reached maturity between 1820 and 1850.

Ultimate  
influence on  
literature of the  
Revolution and  
of the Napoleonic  
régime

In a greater or lesser degree we have already found, in the works of Madame de Staël and of Chateaubriand, some of the chief factors which go to make up romanticism: an intense individualism in art and life, accompanied by that mysterious moral disease known as the *mal du siècle*; an interest in the local colour of other lands and in medieval national history, to which may now be added a growing taste for the spectacular. All these tendencies were fostered and developed by the Revolution and the Napoleonic régime.

The Revolution did not merely suspend salon life for some ten years, it killed the spirit for which  
 i. Individualism the salons had stood, and though they were re-opened later and continued to flourish throughout the nineteenth century, their influence was henceforth of a very limited kind, and *les gens du monde* generally and society women in particular no longer fixed the standard of taste in literature. In fact the very idea of *goût*, which since the days of Boileau had been the great literary pre-occupation in France, was lost sight of, and this, coupled with the fact that the reading-public was becoming larger, more scattered, and less organized, left the writer free, for good or for ill, to follow the lines dictated to him by his own individual tastes or personal idiosyncracies. And his personal tastes were less and less likely to be classical, for the Revolution which closed the salons also disorganized the classical system of education, and even when in a modified form it was resumed, it had in an ever-increasing degree to make room for science, mathematics, and technical subjects, with the result that before long neither writers nor readers had the necessary background to become producers or consumers of classical literature. Moreover, the rising generation under the Revolution and the Empire, owing to the general dislocation of life, received a disjointed education, discipline was virtually unknown to them, and no obstacles were placed in the way of the free development of their individuality. Small wonder that they were individualists. Small wonder, too, that the children of



the Empire were filled with a powerless despair: their grandfathers had fought in the Revolution, had shared its ideals and high hopes, had seen "France standing on the top of golden hours," and had suffered the inevitable disillusionment; their fathers were soldiers of Napoleon, and had followed him from victory to victory until Saint-Helena claimed him as her own.

2. *Mal du siècle*

"Pendant les guerres de l'Empire, tandis que les maris et les frères étaient en Allemagne, les mères inquiètes avaient mis au monde une génération ardente, pâle, nerveuse. . . . Alors s'assit sur un monde en ruines une jeunesse soucieuse. Tous ces enfants étaient des gouttes d'un sang brûlant qui avait inondé la terre; ils étaient nés au sein de la guerre, pour la guerre. Ils avaient rêvé pendant quinze ans des neiges de Moscou, et du soleil des Pyramides. . . . Ils avaient dans la tête tout un monde; ils regardaient la terre, le ciel, les rues et les chemins; tout cela était vide et les cloches de leurs paroisses résonnaient seules dans le lointain."

The second chapter of Musset's *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle*, from which this passage is taken, and Vigny's preface to *Servitude et Grandeur Militaire*, give an admirable, though excessively generalized, picture of the younger generation's state of mind after the fall of Napoleon. Themselves illustrious victims of the *mal du siècle*, they were too ready to regard it as a universal malady rather than one which attacked artistic temperaments almost exclusively.

"Toute la maladie du siècle présent vient de deux causes; le peuple qui a passé par '93 et 1814 porte au cœur deux blessures. *Tout ce qui était n'est plus; tout ce qui sera n'est pas encore.* Ne cherchez pas ailleurs le secret de nos maux."<sup>1</sup>

"All that was, is no more,"—the Revolution had emancipated the individual and it had emancipated thought, but religious faith had been undermined, and so had the belief in the saving power of civilization and progress, which

<sup>1</sup> Alfred de Musset: *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, Chap. II.

had stood in the stead of religion during the eighteenth century.

In the meantime war and emigration were bringing Frenchmen into closer contact with other nations. The influence of the foreign spirit, only superficial and transitory on the soldier, was much deeper and more lasting on the *émigrés*, who gained during their exile a personal knowledge of other lands, peoples, and literatures, which prepared the way for sympathy with them, while Napoleon's titanic schemes of conquest fired men's imaginations and made the remotest parts of Europe and even India and the East seem nearer than they had ever been before. Though officially Napoleon encouraged pseudo-classicism in art and literature, it should be remembered that in personal action and character he was a very "Prince of Romantics"; that the books he carried with him on his campaigns included *Ossian*, *Werther*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and the old Testament; that he was fatalistic and superstitious by temperament, and that he had a keen sense for spectacular effect. These traits in the Emperor's personality and taste undoubtedly impressed his contemporaries, and confirmed them in their own leanings.

The interest in the Middle Ages, manifested in the works of Madame de Staël and Chateaubriand, was reflected in the art and in the minor writings of the Consulate and the Empire, and took the form of the so-called *goût troubadour*, a false and superficial cult of medievalism and largely a question of costume. At the same time, however, some serious research was being undertaken on the subject of medieval French poetry. In 1810 the Institut de France offered a prize for the best dissertation on the general state of French poetry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Three years earlier M. J. Chénier had delivered a course of lectures on the Troubadours, and Raynouard was already collecting materials for his *Choix de poésies des Troubadours* (1816-1821), while Creuzé de Lesser, with his adaptations, *Les*

*Chevaliers de la Table Ronde* (1812) and *Roland* (1814), was spreading a knowledge of the old French epics and romances.

None of these works have any great literary value, but they are important because they furnished the Romantics of a later date with a mine of medieval material.



BOOK II

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT





## CHAPTER I

### THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

THE Romantic Revival is a general European movement in art, and being, perhaps more than any other movement, vague and complex, defies any attempt at clear and brief definition.

Yet many illuminating and suggestive descriptions of the essential spirit of romanticism have been offered by English and foreign critics. It has been said to stand in the same relation to classicism as the picturesque to the statuesque (Schlegel), as the suggestive to the definite, as the infinite to the finite, as disease to health (Goethe). This last view has been maintained by M. Lasserre, whose book, *Le Romantisme français*, was written to prove that romanticism was nothing more nor less than a "désordre sentimental," and more recently by Irving Babbett who, in *Rousseau and Romanticism*, regards the philosophy of life inaugurated by Rousseau as radically unsound and as representing a tendency "away from, rather than towards, civilization."

For our present purpose perhaps the best working definition is that which characterizes romanticism as "an endeavour to express that side of life which cannot be explained by pure reason," for it includes Theodore Watts Dunton's idea of a "Renaissance of Wonder," the phrase he applies to "the great revived stirring of the slumbering movement of the soul of man, after a long period of prosaic acceptance in all things, including literature and art,"<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Poetry and the Renascence of Wonder*, p. 237 (Herbert Jenkins, 1916).

Symons's definition of the Romantic Movement as the "re-awakening of the imagination, a re-awakening to a sense of beauty and strangeness in natural things, and in all the impulses of the mind and the senses."<sup>1</sup>

Since romanticism was a general European movement, it had common characteristics wherever it was found, but these characteristics were modified by the national conditions and traditions prevailing in the various countries in which it flourished. It may therefore be a help to the understanding of the Romantic Revival in France if we take a brief glance into its history in England, Germany, and Italy. As a definite movement romanticism makes its appearance earlier in England and Germany than in France or Italy, but in all countries Rousseau was its real inaugurator.

In England the first signs of the movement are to be found as far back as Thomson's *Seasons* (1726-1730), and the revival of a feeling for nature which they inaugurated is later reflected, together with a mood of melancholy contemplation and in spite of literary and classical conventions, in the poems of Gray and Collins. The English Romantic dawn, however, is usually dated from the publication of Percy's *Reliques* in 1765, which had been preceded by a few years by Macpherson's *Ossian*. Both these books, with their tragic atmosphere, their sense of the mysterious and the supernatural, and their idealization of popular tradition had a profound influence not only in England, but the *Reliques* also in Germany and *Ossian* all over Europe. The appearance of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), with the successive prefaces and appendices in which Wordsworth framed the collection, gave the new movement a programme; nevertheless, the Romantic Revival in England never became a definite school as it did for a time at least on the Continent, and being less the result of deliberate planning, produced very few theoretical works, and never allowed its ideals to stiffen into dogmas. As Professor Saintsbury puts it, in England

<sup>1</sup> *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, p. 17 (Constable, 1909).

"the new wine shaped the bottles, when it did not burst them, by its own fermentation." Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Sir Walter Scott are all in varying senses romantic, yet they differ far more profoundly from each other than do any corresponding group of romantic writers in other countries.

It was in Germany that the first and most thorough-going reaction set in against French classicism and the spirit and æsthetic ideas of eighteenth-century France to which German literature had more than that of any other country been in thrall, since, unlike England, France, or Italy, she lacked a national literary tradition. This reaction is the dominant characteristic of the whole period from Klopstock's first appearance on the literary horizon (1748) to the death of Goethe (1832).

The *Sturm und Drang* Movement (1770-1780) is full of romantic elements, but what is generally known as German romanticism set in in 1798 with the publication by the brothers Schlegel of a literary journal, the *Athenæum*. The Schlegels, together with Tieck and Novalis, became the leaders of the new movement, and they were all in close relation and sympathy with those apostles of individualism and mysticism—the philosophers, Fichte and Schelling, and the theologian, Schleiermacher. The first Romantic school (1798-1804), which had its centre at Berlin and Jena, was succeeded by a second group of romantic writers—known as the Heidelberg school (1806-1810)—of which the most important members were Arnim, Brentano, and Görres, and the brothers Grimm, who lived and wrote, under the spell of the Middle Ages and of popular poetry and folk-lore.

The German romanticists, unlike their English contemporaries, were rather theorists than men of original genius, and the results of the movement in Germany were scientific rather than purely literary. Of it was born the scientific study of Germanic philology and folk-lore, an intense feeling for medieval art and life with its attendant mysti-

cism, and a strong national feeling which found active expression in the wars of liberation (1813-1815).

In Italy the Romantic Movement (1816-1825) came late, and at a time when its aims and ideals were becoming clearer. This, together with the fact that the classical tradition was indigenous to the very soil of Italy and hence part of her national inheritance, made the movement there much more ephemeral and much more restricted in every way than it was in England, Germany, or France, or as the Italian critic Flamini puts it—"a return of art to the religious, heroic, and chivalrous ideals of the Middle Ages was spontaneous and national in character among the Germanic peoples, but artificial and foreign to us sons of Rome." The Italian Romantic Revival was directly influenced by *Ossian* and German poetry, and indirectly by Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, and later by Scott and Byron. In the main, however, romanticism was in Italy, as in Germany and for much the same reasons, intellectual and political rather than literary, but by shaking up ideas and breaking the tyranny of rules it cleared the field for new developments in literature.



## CHAPTER II

### THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN FRANCE

c. 1820-1850

**T**HUS romanticism in France, retarded by the Revolution and the Empire, was the result of a long process of preparation. With the fall of Napoleon and the return of the Bourbons came peace and liberty,

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN FRANCE** and the long-pent-up movement found a favourable atmosphere in which to develop and flourish. From 1820 onwards the new spirit which had first entered literature through the medium of prose (Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, and Madame de Staël) chose poetry as its chief means of expression. In his glowing account of the school of 1830, Catulle Mendès writes: "De même que la Révolution fut une espèce d'ode, de même que l'Empire fut une espèce d'épopée, notre ode sera une révolution et notre épopée triomphera impérialement."<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo always maintained, and rightly too, that the literary revolution accomplished between 1820 and 1830 was the counterpart of the political upheaval of 1789. "Le romantisme tant de fois mal défini . . . n'est que le libéralisme en littérature."

Romanticism in France was late in crystallizing into a school, but when it did so it was not only more thoroughgoing and uncompromising but also more consciously a movement than it ever was elsewhere. Moreover, though

<sup>1</sup> *Rapport sur le mouvement poétique français de 1867 à 1900*, p. 53 (1903).

it was as full of theories as the corresponding German school, it produced as many masterpieces as the Romantic Revival in England, which is saying a good deal.

The Romantic Movement in France has both a negative and a positive aspect : on the one hand, it is a protest and a revolt against classicism in art and literature ; on the other, it is an endeavour to give expression to a changed attitude towards emotion and imagination.

For two centuries and a half French writers had worshipped at the classical shrine ; in no other country except in Italy, where it was indigenous to the soil, had the classical tradition such deep roots, and in no other country was the hatchet aimed so fiercely at its roots as in uncompromising France. The Romantics reacted against classicism generally—that is to say, against the seventeenth-century interpretation of the art of antiquity—and more particularly against the dead and formal pseudo-classicism of the Age of Enlightenment. It is as though they made it a point of honour to believe and to do just the opposite of what the classical writers had believed and done : the seventeenth century had drawn its inspiration from antiquity ; the pseudo-classicists of a later age had sought their models in the *grand siècle* and had thus become imitators at second hand ; the Romantics either disdain models altogether and turn for inspiration to the contemporary world, or seek quickening and material in the Middle Ages or in modern foreign literature. Classical art had taken the normal and the representative as its theme ; romantic art takes the abnormal and the exceptional. The classicist believed that hard work and discipline are necessary if the greatest genius is to become an artist, that every literary kind has a prescribed form and certain definite laws which must be obeyed ; that he who possesses it need only allow his temperament to overflow, in order to produce a masterpiece ; the romantic believes that genius knows no effort, and that rules and standards are a hindrance rather than a help, for self-expression, not self-control, is the means to his end, which is a representation

i. Its negative aspect a reaction against classicism

of the singular and the characteristic rather than of the universal and the beautiful.

The new elements introduced by Romanticism into French literature are nearly all due to the riot of imagination and feeling which it let loose. All great literature is imaginative, and the great classical age in France has been described as "a time when reason and imagination" (and one might add emotion) "pulled together harmoniously in the service of poetic insight."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the generations which succeeded lacked imagination, and emotion had degenerated into sensibility. The romantics were right in thinking that reason and sensibility were a poor substitute for imagination and feeling, but wrong in thinking that imagination and feeling can dispense with reason or good sense, which in literature means a sense of fitness and proportion, and it is this blind spot in their artistic outlook that accounts for some of their worst excesses and most signal defects.

"Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas," said Pascal, but Pascal had not broken with tradition, Christian or otherwise; the Romantics had, and at such a moment "to deny your head in favour of your heart" is a somewhat dangerous experiment. The French Romantics subscribed most heartily to Goethe's dictum "Gefühl ist alles," and would have amended the Cartesian "Je pense donc je suis" into "Je sens donc je suis."

Nevertheless, the change of attitude towards feeling and imagination which they preached and practised was salutary at the time, and resulted in an outburst of lyrical poetry such as France had never seen before. Since no standard of taste bade the romantic poet suppress or ignore his most intimate feelings, but on the contrary a revelation of them was the best means of proclaiming his uniqueness; since he was thrown back upon himself for inspiration, and since, as we have seen, his early environment and training had made him eminently an individualist, it is not surprising

<sup>1</sup> Irving Babbett: *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston, 1919).

that the keynote of romantic literature is its intense subjectivity. "Le moi est haïssable," said and thought Pascal and the whole classical school after him; not so the romantic poet, who not only beholds everything in the mirror of his own individuality, but is obsessed with himself and is firmly convinced that he is equally interesting to others. The autobiographical note is ever present in the works of the period, and, not content with this, most of the Romantics wrote their life-story as well, the very titles of which are illuminating: Rousseau's *Confessions*, and Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* are followed by Musset's *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle*, Vigny's *Journal d'un poète*, and Lamartine's *Confidences* and *Nouvelles Confidences*, to name only a few of the more important of these autobiographies.

These specialists in their own sensations and emotional adventures found their greatest solace in lonely communing with wild nature, which either soothed or intensified their woes. Indeed, to them it little mattered which, for the *mal du siècle*, to which they were all more or less victims, though perfectly sincere, was not without its luxury.

The awe felt in the presence of nature is closely connected with several other characteristics of romantic literature which may be most conveniently summed up by Watts Dunton's phrase "*the Renaissance of Wonder*." The feeling of wonder not only gives the romantic poet himself great emotional satisfaction, but he loves to excite it in others. This partly at least explains his love of the marvellous, the unknown and the infinite, and—to use Pater's phrase—his "addition of strangeness to beauty." In Shakespeare's words he would recommend—

"A wild dedication of yourselves  
To unpath'd waters, undream'd shores."

—*Winter's Tale*, IV, 4.

It is also in part the magic lent by distance which helps to account for the spell cast over the writers of the Romantic Revival by the Middle Ages, to which they were already drawn by reason of its picturesque qualities, its supposed



freedom from convention, and its adventurous and romantic legends.

Complete freedom in art, subjectivity, melancholy, an intense love of nature, an attitude of wonder, and a sensitiveness to all that is picturesque and to the lure of the Middle Ages, these then are in varying degrees in different writers the chief elements in French Romanticism.

The Romantic Revival in France was greatly stimulated by the example of foreign literature which deeply impressed critics and theorists, but which was probably more admired than read by the general public, quite content to accept the interpretation of it given by their critical betters.

FOREIGN  
INFLUENCES  
ON FRENCH  
ROMANTI-  
CISM  
(1813-1830)

After the impression made by English thought and political theories during the first half of the eighteenth century, had followed the vogue of Richardson's novels which greatly influenced Rousseau and were partly at least responsible for the cult of sensibility which characterized that period. Later came translations of Young's *Night Thoughts* (1769), and *Ossian*, which, translated first by Letourneur (1777) and re-translated and abridged by Baour Lormian in 1801, remained in high favour throughout the Romantic period, and had a great influence on Lamartine. But the chief literary idols of the day were Shakespeare, Byron, and Walter Scott. Shakespeare was read in Letourneur's translation, revised by Guizot in 1821, and his influence was strong on all the French romantic dramatists, though they missed one of the chief features of his genius, his imaginative insight, and sought chiefly in his work a confirmation and justification of their own theories. The influence of Byron was much more direct: his poems, translated by Pichot (1819-1822), fired the imaginations of Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Vigny, and Musset, and increased their desire to sing of nature, solitude, liberty, the East, and Napoleon; while his own melancholy personality seen through that of his heroes, Conrad the Corsair, Manfred, Lara, etc., together with his romantic and tragic death at Missolonghi, was largely responsible for

ENGLISH  
INFLUENCE



the psychology of the romantic hero "l'homme fatal," "le beau ténébreux." While Byron influenced the thought, Walter Scott put his mark on the form of French literature. His chief works were translated between 1814 and 1821, and as we shall see later the historical novel in France at this period proceeds directly from him.

Sainte-Beuve, the great apostle of national tradition during the Romantic Revival, declares categorically that the movement in France owed nothing essential to Germany, but this is only true if the

GERMAN  
INFLUENCE

German inspiration of Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* be left out of account, and if a taste for medievalism and for the fantastic and the supernatural be regarded as unessential features of French Romanticism. The school of 1820 may have read few German books, but those they read they read thoroughly and admired exceedingly: Goethe's ballads, for instance, *Werther* and *Faust*, to which Texte traces the growing tendency towards philosophical poetry; Hoffmann's *Fantastic Tales*, and Schiller's plays. Théophile Gautier characterizes Schiller as "Shakespeare corrigé et refroidi," and it is significant that, even when in the throes of a Romantic Revival, a Frenchman should have had a more real admiration for him than for the great Englishman.

It was thus mainly in the literatures of the North that the French Romantics sought inspiration, yet their cosmopolitan curiosity did not stop there, but was extended to Italy, Spain, and the East.

INFLUENCE OF  
SOUTHERN  
LITERATURES

In these countries of the sun they sought the warmth, the colour, and the vividness which the misty North, for all its other charms, could not give them. Sismondi's *Littérature du Midi de l'Europe*, first published in 1813 and re-edited and enlarged in 1824 and 1829, did much the same work for southern as *De l'Allemagne* had done for northern

Italy

literature. Stendhal, in his novels and in his impressions of travel, revealed Italian passion and energy; others admired Italy's patriotism and sympathized with the spirit of the Risorgimento. Guinguéné, by his *Histoire Littéraire d'Italie* (1811), had awakened an

interest in the early Italian poets, and especially in Dante, whose *Divina Commedia*, translated by Arnaud de Montor (1811-1813), was admired by all the Romantics. Petrarch influenced Lamartine, while Manzoni, himself a disciple of Scott, reinforced the latter's influence in France, and traces of the pessimistic Leopardi are to be found in Vigny's poems.

Spain and the East cast their glamour on the Romantics, though the knowledge they had of them was but superficial. Chivalrous and heroic Spain, the Spain of the Moors, influenced Victor Hugo, while all the writers of his generation were enthusiasts for the Greek War of Independence, and found in the ruins and modern heroes of Greece an inexhaustible source of lyrical themes. Following in the wake of Chateaubriand, nearly all the Romantics drew inspiration from one of the great monuments of ancient Eastern literature—the Bible, and more particularly the Old Testament.

It is to these foreign influences, which are much richer and more complex than can be indicated in a brief survey, that the French Romantics owe their passion for that "local colour" which came to be an essential element in their conception of beauty.

The victory of the Romantic doctrines was not won without a struggle, and was not complete until the triumph of *Hernani* in 1830. The controversy may be said to have begun in the year 1813, which saw the publication of Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, Sismondi's *Littérature du Midi de l'Europe*, and Madame Necker de Saussure's translation of Schlegel's *Cours de littérature dramatique*, three books which seriously imperilled the classical doctrine, for did not Schlegelsay in so many words that it was time to overthrow "la prétention qu'ont les Français de s'ériger en législateurs universels du bon goût," and did not Madame de Staël declare that "ce que la France pouvait avoir de varié et d'original lui avait été oté par la discipline du bon

THE CONTRO-  
VERSY  
BETWEEN  
CLASSICS AND  
ROMANTICS

PRELUDE  
(1813-1820)

ton"? As for Sismondi, with his glowing descriptions of the emotional and imaginative poetry of the South, was he not teaching admiration for something which was far removed from the classical tradition? In nine successive articles of the *Journal des Débats* for 1814, the classical journalist, Dussault, endeavoured to refute the audacious views they expressed, remarking in one of them: "Voilà la guerre civile décidément allumée dans tous les états d'Apollon. Les deux parties sont en présence." Two years later appeared Saint-Chaman's *Anti-Romantique*, a similar attack on the theories of Madame de Staël, Sismondi, and Schlegel.

The epithet "romantique," applied in France for the first time to literature by Madame de Staël, had come to stay. Hitherto the word had been used as a synonym of fantastic, or partaking of the nature of romance. Rousseau and others had also used it as an epithet for wild scenery. In the late eighteenth century it began to be applied in Germany to things medieval as opposed to classical. Madame de Staël borrowed the term "romantique" from the Germans in this sense, and used it in rather a confused way to denote northern as opposed to southern literature, subjective as opposed to objective writing, and Christian and modern as opposed to ancient and pagan tradition and inspiration. To the end the word retained a very vague connotation, and Musset, the *enfant terrible* of the French Romantic Movement, in the first of his *Lettres de Depuis à Cotonet* (1833), made fun of the various meanings which since 1820 had been attached to the term.

The date 1820 is an important one in the annals of the Romantic school. In that year appeared Lamartine's *Premières Méditations*, which sounded the first onset of a new poetic movement, for in these poems the eternal themes of Love, Nature, and Death are treated in a sincere and entirely personal manner. So far the movement had scarcely been conscious of itself, but the press-warfare which was waged between 1820 and 1830 between Classics and Romantics helped the latter to clear up their ideas and aspirations.

FIRST PHASE  
OF THE  
CONTROVERSY  
(1820-1824)

In 1819 the eighteen-year-old Victor Hugo had, with the help of his eldest brother Abel, founded the weekly *Conservateur Littéraire*, the literary counterpart of Chateaubriand's political *Conservateur*, which had been started a little earlier for the propagation of ultra-royalist ideas. Nearly all the articles in Victor Hugo's review came from his own pen, and though in many ways he shows himself to be as conservative in literary taste as he then was in politics, he wrote an enthusiastic article on *Ivanhoe*, another on *Les Premières Méditations*, and a third on Chénier's poems (published 1819), in which he declares that Chénier is a Romantic among the Classics and Lamartine a Classic among the Romantics. *Le Conservateur Littéraire* died a natural death in 1821, and the following year appeared Victor Hugo's first volume of verse under the title *Odes et poésies diverses* and Alfred de Vigny's *Poèmes* (published anonymously), followed in 1823 by Lamartine's *Nouvelles Méditations*, Victor Hugo's *Han d'Islande*, and Vigny's *Eloa*. In the intervening year, 1822, Stendhal issued the first manifesto of the Romantic school, *Racine et Shakespeare*, an attack on literary imitation and a declaration that since literature is essentially the expression of society, nineteenth-century poetry can no longer seek its inspiration in antiquity or in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' interpretation of it.

At this point the young poets began to group themselves, and formed about 1823 what is known as the  
The Premier  
Cénacle Premier Cénacle, which met every Sunday at the house of Charles Nodier, and later, when he had been appointed librarian of the Arsenal, at his official residence. This first group comprised, besides Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Emile and Antony Deschamps, men of an older generation like Giraud, Soumet, and Chênedollé, who, though they themselves wrote in the classical style, were in sympathy with the new movement. The great link between the members of this group was that they were all fervent Royalists and Catholics, or, as they would have said themselves, upholders of the throne and of the



altar. In July, 1823, they founded a monthly review *La Muse française* to take the place of the *Conservateur Littéraire*. This new journal was in no wise revolutionary in its views, but rather adopted a conciliatory attitude. Though it fulminated against the pseudo-classicism of the eighteenth century, and against its lack of emotion and imagination, and though it showed great sympathy for foreign literature, *La Muse française* laid no disrespectful hand on the literature of the great classical age. The review only lived a year, but in spite of a certain timidity it may be regarded as the forcing house of the Romantic school. Early in 1824 two articles—one by Giraud entitled *Nos Doctrines*, and another by Emile Deschamps, *La Guerre en Temps de Paix*—cleared up the position by affirming that while the Classicists are prosaic and put all their trust in reason and memory, the Romantics are filled with the poetic spirit and put all their faith in the heart.

The compromising spirit shown by the Cénacle de l'Arsenal and its organ *La Muse française* did not in the least conciliate the orthodox, who in their official organs, *La Minerve française* (1818-1820), *La Minerve Littéraire* (1820-1822), *La Gazette de France*, *La Quotidienne*, and *Les Débats*, persisted in using the word "romantique" as a synonym of "barbare" and "frénétique."

In 1824, at a meeting of the Académie française, Louis Auger read a *Discours contre le romantisme*. The same year the Academy of Rouen published a collection of discourses against Romanticism, with a preface which contains the following remark: "L'année 1824 fera époque dans notre littérature par les jugements sévères qui ont été portés contre le romantisme."

In the early days the young Romantics were staunch lovers of their king, their country, and their religion, while the champions of classicism were for the most part opposers of the throne and the altar. In an article in the *Quotidienne* (March 19, 1823) Nodier maintains that this is not an inconsistency on the part of his friends, the Romantics.



“Quant aux royalistes romantiques, je les trouve fort conséquents, parce que je suppose qu'ils aiment la liberté qui se concilie fort bien avec un gouvernement monarchique appuyé sur les intérêts nationaux, et qui ne se concilie peut-être qu'avec lui.”

On the other hand, he declares that he cannot understand how Liberals in politics can be conservative in literary matters. The reason, however, is not far to seek. The Liberals of the early years of the Restoration were nearly all born under Louis XV and Louis XVI, and having been brought up on Delille's poetry and Voltaire's tragedies, they may be said to have had pseudo-classicism in their very veins. Intellectually, they still belonged to the rationalistic eighteenth century, which had prepared the way for the Revolution, and they seem to have kept a superstitious respect for that little fragment of the old order which had survived the great upheaval of 1789, namely, descriptive poetry and classical tragedy. In his *Journal d'un Poète* Alfred de Vigny tells us that when in 1819 he asked Benjamin Constant why it was that the Liberals disliked the new trend in literature the latter replied :

“que c'était affaire de bonne compagnie, que c'était crainte de paraître vouloir briser toutes les chaînes, qu'on voulait conserver les plus légères, celle des règles littéraires.”

Between 1824 and 1830, however, the Liberals came to see that they could not logically champion political and social freedom without admitting liberty in art also, and this explains the pro-Romantic tendency at this period of their official organ, *Le Globe* (founded 1793), of which Sainte-Beuve became one of the chief literary critics. At the same time, one of the more important Conservative papers, *La Quotidienne*, after a period of hostility and hesitation, became between 1824-1829 a staunch supporter of the Romantics, and more particularly of Lamartine and Victor Hugo, whose odes on the death of Louis XVIII and on the solemn coronation of Charles X at Rheims had paid such a flaming tribute to royalism and to all that it stood for.

Only a few months elapsed, however, before the individual Romantics themselves were filled with indignation at the fall of Chateaubriand, with disgust at the ultra-royalism and tyranny of Charles X, and with enthusiasm for the Greek War of Independence, and by 1830 literary and political liberalism had permanently joined hands.

In the meantime the Romantics were becoming more definitely revolutionary, both in the theory and the practice of their art. In 1826 Victor Hugo produced *Bug Jargal* and *Les Odes et Ballades* with a preface claiming complete liberty for the poet; and the same year Vigny published his *Poèmes Antiques et Modernes* and his historical romance *Cinq-Mars*.

In 1827 followed the famous *Préface de Cromwell*, in which Victor Hugo summarized and formulated all the romantic ideas and aspirations which had been in the air since the beginning of the century with the addition of his new theory of the grotesque, the use of which he advocates on the grounds that "l'on a besoin de se reposer de tout, même du beau."

During the same year Sainte-Beuve was contributing to the *Globe* a series of articles on French literature of the sixteenth century, in which he sets out to prove that the new school is not really revolutionary, but is merely reverting to an older French tradition. These articles, revised and enlarged, appeared in book-form in 1828 under the title *Tableau historique et critique de la poésie française au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle*, and their insistence on the necessity of a complete reform of the language and metre of poetry was not lost upon his friends, nor was his curious attempt to seek an ancestor for the romantic school of poetry in André Chénier (cf. Preface to his *Poésies de Joseph Delorme*, 1829). In his *Etudes françaises et étrangères* (1828) Emile Deschamps had, like Sainte-Beuve, laid stress on the importance of technique, and recommended for this purpose a study of Chénier's work. Henceforward the Romantics, led by Victor Hugo, who had now become the recognized leader of the new school, paid increasing attention to metrical effect and to the enrichment of their vocabulary.

During the eighteenth century a distinction had grown up between words which were "noble" and words which were "bas." Since only the former were admitted in poetry, and since, as Nisard puts it, the eighteenth century had confused nobility of language with the language of the nobility, the French poetic vocabulary had steadily diminished since the *grand siècle*. Given their views, it was natural that the Romantics should have abandoned this distinction, and that they should have loved words chiefly for their power of suggesting strangeness, contrast, vastness, and colour.

These artistic and technical questions were the main subject of discussion at the reunions of the  
The Second  
Cénacle Second Cénacle, which met at Victor Hugo's house in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, and which was far more uncompromisingly romantic than the earlier one had been. Here literary men like Nodier, Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, Alexandre Dumas, Alfred de Musset, and Gerard de Nerval, met and talked with artists and sculptors such as Eugene Delacroix, David d'Angers, Louis Boulanger, etc., who helped to teach them the value of form and colour, to which Victor Hugo was by nature so fully alive, witness his *Orientales* published in 1829. The preface to this collection of poems contains a further declaration of Romantic principle, namely: "L'ouvrage est-il bon ou est-il mauvais? Voilà tout le domaine de la critique," and "Tout a droit de cité en poésie."

On January 25, 1830, when the theatre was packed with an enthusiastic Bohemian audience, came the glorious first night of *Hernani*, and the Romantic battle was to all intents and purposes won.

The Revolution of July dispersed the members of the  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
ROMANTIC  
MOVEMENT  
AFTER 1830 Cénacle. "La Revolution de 1830," remarks Sainte-Beuve, "a rompu brusquement le concert poétique." <sup>1</sup> Henceforward the various Romantic writers went their several ways, and developed on their own lines, as indeed, according to their common æsthetic doctrine, it was right that they should do. At

<sup>1</sup> *Portraits Contemporains*, III, p. 331.

the same time a new element introduced itself into their art —an increasing preoccupation with the burning social questions of the day. Royalists and Legitimists in 1820, Liberals in 1830, the Romantics, disgusted with the bourgeois régime of Louis Philippe, were Democrats in 1840, and though they still soared in lofty poetic regions far removed from reality, they were increasingly anxious that their poetical dreams should be a guiding force among the people at large. This new view of their art was doubtless encouraged, if not actually suggested, by the Saint-Simonians, who, masters of the *Globe* during the early years of the July monarchy, devoted much space in its pages to entreating the great poets of the age to cease singing of the dead past and of themselves, and to sing instead of and to the people with the object of firing it with a desire for progress.

Victor Hugo had always believed that the poet is a seer, a prophet who knows intuitively what others may later prove scientifically. After 1830 he became more and more obsessed by the idea that the poet has a mission—that he should be a leader of men, a “shepherd of the people,” and this idea was shared by most of his former associates. Filled with this missionary spirit, the Romantics felt that the best way to have an influence over the people was to speak to it of its interests, its hopes, and its future. Already in 1834 Lamartine writes in his *Destinées de la Poésie* :

“C’est elle (la poésie) qui plane sur la société et qui la juge, et qui, montrant à l’homme la vulgarité de son œuvre, l’appelle sans cesse en avant, en lui montrant du doigt des utopées, des républiques imaginaires, des cités de Dieu, et lui souffle au cœur le courage de les atteindre.”

In France the modern social problem, born of changing economic conditions, and of the rise of modern industry with its attendant capitalism, was a burning question from the Revolution of July to the Revolution of ’48. One can understand, therefore, that under Louis Philippe, Utopian schemes for

Romantic  
humanitarianism  
tends to sup-  
plant romantic  
individualism

The poet's  
mission

The Utopian  
schemes of the  
Socialists find  
an echo in  
literature



the amelioration of the lot of the working classes should have been the order of the day. These ideas found an echo in Romantic poetry (Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Vigny) and in the Romantic novel (Victor Hugo, George Sand), mainly in the form of a feeling of love and pity for the poor and disinherited of the earth, and of a desire to lend them a helping hand. Thus Michelet became the historian of the masses, Victor Hugo their bard, Lamartine their orator and statesman, and Lamennais their prophet. With the exception of George Sand, Michelet, and Lamennais, however, sympathy with the socialistic as opposed to the democratic movement remained purely imaginative and sentimental, and never got beyond a kind of visionary philanthropy.

During this later period the Romantics were convinced not only that they had a mission, but that France herself had a message to the rest of the world which she would redeem through her Gospel of the "Rights of Man." Thus was Romantic individualism transformed into Romantic humanitarianism.

In 1834 Lamartine, who had always held himself somewhat aloof, became a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and before long renounced poetry entirely in favour of politics. At about the same date, Alfred de Musset, the only romantic with a sense of humour, broke definitely with the ideals of his youth, and almost ceased to write poetry at all. Alfred de Vigny, the most reserved of the romantics, who had quarrelled with Victor Hugo even before the Cénacle was broken up, retired more and more into his "tower of ivory," and after 1837 published very little. In 1840 Sainte-Beuve, who had long ago shed his romantic skin, set to work on his monumental *Histoire de Port-Royal*, and in some of his later work went so far as to disown his former friends.

As for Victor Hugo—who is, in his own person, the synthesis of the whole movement, and whose literary productions only ceased with his death in 1885—for a period of some ten years (1841–1852) literature became with him a form of

Belief in the  
mission of  
France

Most of the  
great Romantics  
renounce the  
ideals of their  
youth



politics, and when in exile he took up his pen once more in the old manner, he seemed to the younger generation a great and admirable survivor of an age that was gone.

Thus by about 1840 the decline of the Romantic school as such had definitely set in, and the time was ripe for new developments in literature.

## CHAPTER III

### RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENTS DURING THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

THE Romantics, more especially after 1830, fondly imagined that they were leaders in the domain of ideas, but in reality they only echoed and helped to popularize the theories of a group of thinkers whose works, unlike those of their eighteenth-century predecessors, had, with a few notable exceptions, small literary merit. These post-revolutionary thinkers all react in one way or another against the irreligious and materialistic tendencies of the Age of Enlightenment.

The religious reaction was inaugurated by Chateaubriand, and by the Conservative Catholics, De Maistre and Bonald, determined upholders of the throne and the altar, and it was continued by the Democratic Catholics, Lamennais and Lacordaire, who were eager to prove that the essential spirit of Democracy was in harmony with the teaching of the gospels.

#### I. THE RELIGIOUS REACTION

Joseph de Maistre (1754-1821), the apostle of authority in Church and State, and as firm a believer as Bossuet in the shaping action of Divine Providence on all human affairs, gave expression to his ideas in a number of books, three of which are justly famous: the *Considérations sur la France* (1796), *Du Pape* (1819), and *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821). All these works might fitly bear the collective title which he added as a subtitle to the last: *Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence*.

In De Maistre's view not only can there be no stable society without religion and no religion without a Church, but the Church of Rome is the only true one, and its virtue depends on an infallible Pope. After the Revolution, which he regarded as a punishment meted out to France by God for her impiety during the eighteenth century, De Maistre was convinced that society needed complete reorganization, but on old not on new lines, for the French absolute monarchy was of divine institution, and man has not the power either to create or improve the work of God.

Much the same thesis was developed by Louis-Gabriel Ambrose de Bonald (1754-1840), but in a style De Bonald  
(1754-1840) entirely lacking the vigour and colour which characterizes the work of De Maistre, and gives the latter an important place among French prose-writers.

With the avowed object of combating the doctrines set forth in the *Esprit des Lois* and the *Contrat Social*, and in the name of Catholic traditions, Bonald takes up the cudgels against the political ideals of the eighteenth century and against the spirit which made the Revolution possible. In his *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux dans la société civile* (1796), in *La Législation primitive considérée dans les derniers temps par les seules lumières de la raison* (1802), and in his *Recherches philosophiques sur les premiers objets de nos connaissances morales* (1818), he sets out to prove that society can only find salvation by a return to God and the King. God, the sovereign of the world, delegates His power in the family to the father, in the State to the King—and these His representatives have the same absolute rights within their respective spheres as God has over the world. As for individual women, children or subjects, they have many duties but no rights. It was hardly possible to be more reactionary, but Bonald has some shrewd remarks on the evils of democracy, and clearly sees the threat of individualism at a time when the Romantic school was still a thing of the future.

There is nothing very original in the views of either De Maistre or Bonald, but their determined effort to prove that

the work of the Revolution had been purely negative and destructive and that contemporary society was hence in need of complete re-organization made a deep impression on the minds of men like Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and many others, and became the starting-point of their political philosophy. On the other hand, the form this re-organization was to take became a variable quantity, and in no case coincided with the recommendations of De Maistre and Bonald.

While these two men set themselves to lead modern society forcibly back to the old religion, three others endeavoured in a greater and a lesser degree to adapt the old religion to the new society.

Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776-1847), like De Maistre and Bonald, belonged to the theocratic school, that is to say, he was an upholder of the principle of authority and set revelation above individual reason. At the same time in a somewhat visionary fashion he tried to reconcile Catholicism with the modern idea of progress, notably in his *Essai sur les institutions sociales dans leur rapport avec les idées nouvelles* (1818) and in his unfinished *Essais de Palingénésie Sociale* (1827). Ballanche's speculative reconstruction of society is deeply imbued with mysticism, and he expounds it with the help of much obscure symbolism, with the result that his ideas were not sufficiently intelligible to have much influence.

Far otherwise was it with Félicité-Robert de Lamennais (1782-1854), an apostle of democratic and humanitarian Christianity, and one of the chief figures in the religious revival of the time. Ordained priest at the age of thirty-four, Lamennais first made his name with his *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* (1817-1823), the first volume of which caused quite as great a sensation as the *Génie du Christianisme*. In this work he constitutes himself the champion of the Catholic Church, and traces indifference in religious matters to a lack of interest in the common weal brought about by excessive individualism. A number of fervent young Catholics,

among them Montalembert, Lacordaire, and Maurice de Guérin, became Lamennais' disciples, and in collaboration with them he founded, in 1830, a paper entitled *L'Avenir*, which, as its motto, "Dieu et Liberté," suggested, was to defend and propagate the doctrine that Catholicism and liberty could and should be reconciled, and to advocate the separation of religion from politics.

The tone of this paper was highly romantic. Its pages rang with youthful and noble enthusiasms expressed in high-sounding phrases, and its doctrines were of the vaguest. The Pope speedily condemned them, and Lamennais, Lacordaire, and Montalembert in 1831 made a journey to Rome to ask the papal pardon and blessing. They came empty away, and were forced to suspend the publication of *L'Avenir*. Shortly afterwards Lamennais broke with orthodox Roman Catholicism, and Montalembert and Lacordaire severed their connection with Lamennais. The

publication of the *Paroles d'un Croyant* (1834) marks his definite rupture with the Church.

Lamennais chose this title for his passionate and eloquent manifesto of Christian socialism to show that his apostasy was not the result of unbelief but of a new conviction. The biblical and apocalyptic style of this book and some of the ideas which it contains were directly inspired by Adam Mickiewicz's *Book of the Polish Pilgrim* (1832), which Montalembert had translated into French. In the name of the Christian religion Lamennais defends the French Revolution, and the sovereignty of the people, and denounces all those who had brought about the fall of Poland and the serfdom of Italy, the monarchs of Europe, the Pope, and the priesthood, reserving no less scathing words of condemnation for the self-interested bourgeois government of France. Within a few years the book ran into some hundred editions, was translated into nearly all the European languages, and contributed greatly to the humanitarian movement, which resulted in the Revolution of 1848. In 1837 followed *Le Livre du Peuple*, inspired by the same ideas. For a pamphlet entitled *Le pays et le gouvernement*



(1840) he was condemned to a year's imprisonment at Sainte-Pélagie, where he composed *Une voix de prison*, *Du passé et de l'avenir du peuple* and *De l'Esclavage moderne*—in which he once more makes a passionate plea for a spiritualized democracy. The *Esquisse d'une philosophie* (1841-1846) was Lamennais' last important work. After the Revolution of 1848 this apostle of the people became one of their representatives in the National Assembly, where he sat, until the *coup d'état* of 1851 forced him to retire from political life.

Lamennais had great poetic gifts, and his biblical and rhythmical prose frequently rises from its general level of monotonous eloquence to flights of pure poetry, instinct with tenderness, mystery, or even terror (cf. *Paroles d'un Croquant*, VII, IX, XIII, XVIII, XXIII, XXV, XLI).

It is worthy of remark that Lamennais was the channel through which the current of democratic and humanitarian ideas first reached Victor Hugo. Though twenty years his junior, Hugo had, as a very young man, entered into intimate relations with Lamennais, to whom he dedicated some of his earliest odes, and who in 1822 became his confessor. Unlike most of Hugo's friendships, this with Lamennais remained unbroken.

The last important figure in the religious revival of the first half of the nineteenth century was the  
**Lacordaire**  
**(1802-1861)** preacher, Henri Lacordaire (1802-1861), who represented a sentimental tendency rather than a school of thought. Originally trained for the Bar, Lacordaire for a time had thought of becoming an actor, but the perusal of Lamennais' passionate vindication of religious belief, *L'Essai sur l'Indifférence*, made a deep impression on his naturally ardent and believing mind, and in 1823 he entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice as a theological student. After his ordination he collaborated with Lamennais in the editorship of *L'Avenir*, for which he wrote a number of articles, but after the papal condemnation he broke with his master, and remained an orthodox Catholic to the end of his days. From 1834 to 1851 he preached numerous

courses of sermons or Christian conferences, as he preferred to call them, first at the Collège Stanislas, and then at Notre-Dame. These courses, which were neither theological nor dogmatic, and which traced the gradual evolution of a soul (his own) from sincere doubt to unquestioning belief, gave a large place to all the religious, political, and social movements and interests of the day, and without outstepping the limits laid down by orthodoxy, advocated Christian democracy and humanitarianism. Lacordaire's conferences attracted large audiences by reason of both their content and their form, which varied from the familiar discourse to the highest flights of romantic lyricism. Already in 1841 Lacordaire had, with the permission of the Pope, re-established in France the Dominicans as a teaching order, and in 1850 he became their Provincial in his own country. In 1854, after delivering a course of *Conferences* at Toulouse, he became head master of the Collège de Sorèze (Tarn), and devoted the rest of his life to the education and direction of the boys under his charge.

A pamphleteer, who under the Restoration took up a position diametrically opposed both to that of De Maistre and Bonald and to that of Lamennais, was Paul-Louis Courier, who was wont to sign his pamphlets "Paul-Louis vigneron de la Channonnière."

Paul-Louis Courier (1772-1825) is an isolated figure whose philosophical and political sympathies are with the eighteenth century, and whose literary tastes are purely classical. This hater of authority and discipline between 1798 and 1809 without any military vocation served in various campaigns of the revolutionary wars. Though by temperament an indifferentist in politics and religion, he made his name as a bitter pamphleteer against Church and State, because any personal grievance or discomfort at once led him to protest on general principles. Thus his *Pétition aux deux Chambres* (1816) was inspired by the royalist reaction in Touraine, where he held estates, and by the resulting petty tyranny which was making life there very unpleasant. His *Lettre à*

## II. POLITICAL WRITERS AND SOCIOLOGISTS

### 1. Paul-Louis Courier (1772-1825)

*M.M. de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, a literary pamphlet, was penned in revenge for not having been elected to that body. The *Simple Discours* (1821), his masterpiece which earned him two months' imprisonment, was written to oppose the proposal that the estate of Chambord should be purchased for the Duke of Bordeaux, on the following grounds :

" Son métier, c'est de régner un jour, s'il plaît à Dieu, et un château de plus ne l'aidera de rien. Nous allons nous gêner et augmenter nos dettes, remettre à d'autres temps nos dépenses pressées, pour lui donner une chose dont il n'a pas besoin, qui ne lui peut servir et servirait à d'autres. Ce qu'il lui faut pour régner, ce ne sont pas des châteaux, c'est notre affection ; car il n'est sans cela couronné qui ne pèse. Voilà le bien dont il a besoin et qu'il ne peut avoir en même temps que notre argent."

This is a typical example of Courier's style, clear, incisive, and restrained, a style which still makes his works delightful reading, ephemeral and often petty in content though they be. He was a satirist and a stylist rather than a thinker. He may be read with the greatest pleasure and profit in the *Simple Discours*, *Le Pamphlet des Pamphlets* (1824), and, above all, in the delightful *Lettres écrites de France et d'Italie* (1787-1812), which give their author a high place among the letter-writers of France.

Courier was a Greek scholar of no mean order, and he was an intense lover of the French classics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He knew Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine, and Molière by heart, and his letters are full of allusions to and quotations from their work. He translated the *Daphnis and Chloe* of Longus into archaic French, and began a similar translation of *Herodotus*, but he did not live to carry out the task. On April 10, 1825, Courier was found shot, in a wood close to his house. Unfortunately, there had been too great a discrepancy between the liberal theories expressed in his public manifestos and his tyrannical practice in private life, and he was murdered, on his own estate, by peasants who had suffered at his hands.

Courier hated Bonapartes, Bourbons, and the Church with

an equal hatred. He had no constructive political ideas beyond a somewhat vague ideal of democratic control, by means of which—

“la nation enfin ferait marcher le gouvernement, comme un cocher qu'on paie, et qui doit nous mener, non où il veut ni comme il veut, mais où nous prétendons aller, et par le chemin qui nous convient.”  
—*Lettres au Rédacteur du Censeur*, IX.

Courier has no place in the history of French thought, political or philosophical, but he has a definite place in French literature because of his style.

We now come to a group of Utopian sociologists whose works belong rather to the early history of socialism and political economy than to literary history. They must be briefly mentioned here, however, because after 1830 they gave a new turn to Romanticism, and provided it with an ethical aim hitherto lacking, and because they tried to delineate the future direction of progress.

#### 2. Utopian sociologists

The example of the Revolution and of the Napoleonic Empire led to a very general belief that it was no difficult matter to sweep away an existing order of society and to build it anew on a better plan. Most political thinkers held that the critical and negative work of eighteenth-century philosophers having brought about the necessary destruction of the *ancien régime*, it was essential for the nineteenth century to accomplish a reorganization of society on entirely new lines. Some thought that the Revolution itself had furnished all the necessary principles upon which to work, but as time went on many more thought otherwise, and not without reason, for within a short space of years the Republic proclaimed by the revolutionary leaders had given way to the Empire and the Empire to the Restoration Monarchy, which, in its turn, was overthrown by the July Revolution of 1830. Such rapid changes of régime could not fail to kill any confidence there may have been in the stability of the existing social order, and as all this was happening at a time when artists and thinkers alike were



filled with an exalted idealism, it is not surprising that political and social theorists should have felt themselves called upon not only to provide plans for the social reorganization of France if not of the world, but also to preach the moral and political gospel of a new age.

These Utopian schemes for the amelioration of society left their traces on literature proper. Enthusiasm for humanitarian ideas marks not only the work of the second generation of romantic writers like George Sand and Michelet, but also the later work of Hugo and Lamartine.

The most important and influential builders of social Utopias during this period were Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Pierre Leroux, who aimed at securing human happiness, not like De Maistre, Lamennais, or Lacordaire, by the hope of reward in the next world, but by a more equitable and ideal organization of society here and now.

Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), a descendant of the author of the *Mémoires*, began his career by serving as a volunteer under Washington in the American War of Independence, continued it as a speculator in land and a man of fashion, and from his early forties onwards became a political economist, sociologist, and the founder of a religion. At the age of fifteen he gave his valet orders to wake him every morning with the words "Levez-vous, Monsieur le Comte, vous avez de grandes choses à faire aujourd'hui," and truly his brain was always teeming with schemes on a grand scale. His plan for connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific by cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Panama was carried out many years after his death, while another scheme for the canalization of Spain never materialized. Having read and admired the passages in *De la Littérature* which deal with human progress, with the value of scientific thought, and with philosophy generally, Saint-Simon imagined that he had discovered his twin-soul, and in 1803 he set out for Coppet in the hope of marrying Madame de Staël, whom he had never seen, and who had recently lost her husband.

"J'avais conçu le plan le plus vaste et le plus utile qui fût entré

HENRI DE  
SAINT-SIMON  
(1760-1825)



dans la tête d'un homme, et Madame de Staël était faite pour le réaliser."

But the lady did not fancy the rôle of wife and collaborator to this world-mender, and Saint-Simon proceeded to Geneva, where he devoted himself to publishing his first book, *Lettres d'un habitant de Genève* (1803), which advocates the opening of a subscription at the tomb of Newton with the purpose of supporting an international council of scientists, philosophers, painters, writers, and musicians to take the place of the Catholic Church as a spiritual power in Europe.

Among Saint-Simon's numerous writings the most important are *Réorganisation de la Société européenne* (1814), a pamphlet written in collaboration with Thierry, who was at this time his secretary, and was later to make his name as an historian; the famous *Parabole* (1819), which proves that only the productive classes of society are useful and indispensable; *Le Système industriel* (1821), in which the young Auguste Comte was his collaborator; *Le Catéchisme politique des Industrielles* (1824), and his two last works, *Opinions Littéraires* (1824) and *Le Nouveau Christianisme* (1825), which contain the clearest and completest exposition of his views.

Saint-Simon is far from being a systematic or consecutive thinker, and the details of his teaching are often vague and inconsistent. The broad outline of his positive reconstruction of society is simple enough. He proceeds from the idea that the Catholic Church as a spiritual power and the feudal and military system as a temporal power have had their day, and are destined to be superseded on the one hand by science and art and on the other by industry. In the new world priests will be replaced by scientists, thinkers, and artists; captains of war by captains of industry, bankers, manufacturers, merchants, etc., both groups working together for the amelioration of the spiritual and material condition of the poorest and most numerous class, and preaching to all men equality, brotherly love, and the necessity and dignity of work, and all this in the interests

Outline of  
Saint-Simon's  
suggested  
reconstruction  
of society

not of eternal salvation but of humanity. Saint-Simon's enthusiasm for industry and his repeated declarations that the object of life is production and the object of society to increase production was too utilitarian an idea to appeal to the Romantics. Not so his humanitarianism and the idea, original to him, that no new social order could have stability without a *new* spiritual doctrine and a *new* spiritual power, the one central conviction in which he never wavers, and round which all his other fluctuating and often incomplete ideas gravitate. Moreover, his idolization of genius, whether in the realm of science, philosophy, literature or art, and his firm belief that it would be for the good of the community to give full power of initiative in political, social, and intellectual matters to an élite of scientists, men of letters, and artists, was bound to appeal to romantic writers already conscious of a mission and only too eager to be regarded as leaders of thought. Lastly, the revolutionary fantastic and vaguely religious elements in Saint-Simon's doctrine could not fail to attract the Romantics for the very reasons for which they repelled the more sober-minded. There is an entry in Victor Hugo's diary for 1830 which shows that he for one at that date was familiar with Saint-Simon's theories, but it was not until after 1830 that they began to be a social force, or to find an echo in literature, and this largely owing to the Saint-Simonian school, founded after his death by some of his devoted followers, who regarded their master as a modern Messiah.

In 1831, through the influence of Leroux, *Le Globe*, hitherto devoted to the interests of Romanticism, became the official organ of the Saint-Simonian school, but by degrees Saint-Simon's disciples deviated more and more from the original system of their master, and when one of their chief leaders, Enfantin, tried to transform the group into a religious sect, most of the less fanatical members seceded and went their several ways, not, however, before their sociological propaganda had drawn the attention of the more intellectual among the general public to the economic and industrial questions they raised. Nearly all the

members distinguished themselves later in the political, financial, or industrial world.

Charles Fourier (1772-1837), a contemporary of Saint-Simon, planned a Utopia of universal prosperity, in which each individual, following his own bent in a communal life, should not only be happy himself but contribute his share to the general happiness. Fourier's scheme, which he first worked out in detail in his *Théorie des quatre Mouvements* (1808), is based on the idea that the evils of society spring from the unnatural restrictions imposed upon the gratification of human desire. Convinced that individualism and competition are the scourges of society, he would substitute for them co-operative or united industry, co-operation being not only economically more efficacious than individual effort, but also the best means of securing that free and harmonious development of human desire which makes for happiness. This latter assumption presupposes that there is innate in each one of us a love of liberty and a love of order, and that only in a society planned on communist lines can both these desires be simultaneously satisfied. The *Théorie* was followed by the *Traité d'association domestique agricole* (1822) and *Le Nouveau Monde industriel* (1829-1830), which contains the fullest exposition of his views. Fourier wrote in an obscure and pedantic style; his ideas, however, enjoyed a certain popularity, and traces of his influence are to be found in the social novels of George Sand. He was a great advocate of the emancipation of women, and it was he who coined the word "feminism."

The Utopian sociologist who most directly influenced the Romantics was Pierre Leroux (1798-1871). This son of an artisan, after receiving a good education, renounced admission to the *Ecole Polytechnique*, and in order to support his mother worked for a time as a mason. Later he became a compositor, and in 1824 joined Du Bois in the foundation of the *Globe*, which, as we have seen, became in 1830 the official organ of the Saint-Simonian school, of which Leroux was at that

time a prominent member, but when the following year the school was transformed into a sect, he broke away from it. In 1838 he founded, with S. Reynaud, a paper entitled the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle* for the propagation of his social and philosophical views, which were a curious medley of doctrines borrowed not only from Saint-Simonian but also from ancient and medieval sources. His chief sociological works, *De l'Egalité* (1838) and *De l'humanité, de son principe et de son avenir* (1840), develop the idea that progress consists in a steady approach to the ideal of equality between man and man, the gradual obliteration of caste and class. They insist on the necessity of preserving the family, country, and property and on the equal necessity of never allowing these to become despotisms, for they must all be subordinate to humanity. This last-named treatise was regarded in his own day as the manifesto of humanitarianism. Indeed, Leroux may almost be said to have made a god of humanity, which he believed to be continuously and indefinitely progressing towards perfection. He had a natural bent towards the cloudy and the mystic, as is clearly seen in his religious views. Rejecting the belief in a future life, he substitutes for it a particular theory of the transmigration of souls. He regards all the great religions of the world as unsatisfactory and incomplete, because they hold that the material world is evil, and because they insist on separating body and soul, spirit and matter. Hence his interest in all sects who were more or less convinced of the divinity of the physical world, and particularly the Taborites, a group of medieval socialists who believed that God was as much a part of material as of spiritual things. The imaginative quality of Leroux' work, and the fact that it brims with sentiments and aspirations, made a great appeal to the Romantics, more especially to George Sand, with whom in 1841 he founded the *Revue Indépendante*, because the *Revue des deux Mondes* had abandoned the democratic cause. Nearly all the novels she wrote between 1839 and 1847 embody his humanitarian, socialistic, and religious views, and one of them, *Spiridion*, was partly written by him. In



a letter written during this period she herself declares :

"George Sand n'est qu'un pâle reflet de Pierre Leroux, un disciple fanatique du même idéal. . . . Je ne suis que le vulgarisateur à la plume diligente et au cœur passionné qui cherche à introduire dans des romans la philosophie du maître."

With Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Leroux, socialism had been Utopian, imaginative, optimistic, vaguely Christian, in a word, it was a somewhat romantic conception, and had remarkably little connection with the practical life of the time. With Proudhon (1809-1865), whose celebrated pamphlet, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* Answer : "*La propriété c'est le vol*" (1840), belongs to this period, and with Louis Blanc (1811-1882), who belongs both to this period and to the next, socialism was closely connected with the actual history of France, became realistic, matter of fact, scientific, and, in Proudhon's case, frankly atheistic, but such influence as these writers had on literature falls into the second half of the century.

3. Proudhon  
and Louis  
Blanc

### III. PHILO- SOPHY

In the domain of philosophy we find the same reaction against the eighteenth-century spirit as in the works of religious, political, or sociological thinkers. The philosopher whose views were dominant during the Romantic period was Victor Cousin (1792-1867), who attempted to establish a spiritualist philosophy in place of the rationalist and sensualist conceptions which had held sway during the Age of Enlightenment. At the early age of twenty-three Cousin was appointed assistant to the then Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne, Royer-Collard (1763-1845), a great exponent of the Scottish school of thought—more particularly of Thomas Reid. Both Royer-Collard and Cousin were disciples of Maine de Biran (1766-1824), the originator of a new psychological method, which consisted in viewing conscious experience as formed not only by external influences (Condillac) but by the real consciousness of self as an active power. After mastering the philosophical thought of Royer-Collard and Maine de Biran, Cousin learnt German in order to study Kant,

Victor Cousin  
(1792-1867)



Jacobi, and Schelling. Two visits, one to Heidelberg (1817) and another to Munich (1818), brought him into personal contact with the two latter, and also with Fichte and Hegel, and in the university courses he delivered between 1819 and 1821 he gave a full exposition of the speculative methods of these great German thinkers.

Cousin's own philosophical system was eclectic, that is to say, an ingenious synthesis of what seemed most ideal and optimistic in all other systems, ancient or modern, and more especially did he strive to find a mean between the scepticism of the Scottish thinkers and the idealism of the German school of thought.<sup>1</sup> His belief that every system of philosophy contains a share at least of the ultimate truth caused him to lay great stress on the importance of the history of philosophy, on which he delivered courses between 1816 and 1818, of which his celebrated book, *Du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien* (1853), was but a matured revision. In 1821 Cousin, like Guizot, was forced to abandon his professorial chair because the Restoration Government regarded his teaching as furthering the ends of liberalism. He remained under suspicion for several years, during which he employed his time by making another visit to Germany, by preparing an edition of the works of Descartes, by beginning his translation of Plato, and by writing the *Fragments philosophiques* (1826), which contain a reasoned statement of his eclectism and of his philosophy of history.

In 1828 Cousin resumed his courses at the Sorbonne, and for the next few years his lecture hall was crowded with interested and admiring listeners.

Cousin's  
influence

He was a clear and eloquent lecturer, and had the power of temporarily identifying himself with the system he was explaining. The Revolution of 1830 made Cousin a member of the University Council, and a dictator in all matters relating to the teaching of philosophy. During the next twenty years in colleges and universities the youth of France received their philosophical training

<sup>1</sup> For a brilliant and witty exposition of Cousin's eclectism read Faguet: *Politiques et Moralistes*, II, pp. 229-280 (1898).

according to a programme drawn up by Cousin and at the hands of men chosen and directed by Cousin. It was a time, as we have seen, when the desire for some new spiritual power was in the air, and he firmly believed that his eclectic philosophy supplied one, for it was indeed a kind of lay religion rather than a philosophy. Cousin's eclecticism did not survive him, but he did important work by revealing German philosophy to France, by creating a general interest in the history of philosophy and in the philosophy of history, and by teaching the rising generation how great is the power of ideas. The moral earnestness of his spiritual philosophy, the connections he saw between metaphysics on the one hand and literature, art, and even politics on the other, opened up new vistas to many young minds carried away by their master's idealism, the quality of which may be gauged from the following passage from the preface of *Du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien* :

"On lui donne à bon droit le nom de spiritualisme, parce que son caractère est de subordonner les sens à l'esprit et de tendre, par tous les moyens que la raison avoue, à élever et à agrandir l'homme. Elle enseigne la spiritualité de l'âme, la liberté et la responsabilité des actions humaines, l'obligation morale, la vertu désintéressée, la dignité de la justice, la beauté de la charité ; et par delà les limites de ce monde, elle montre un Dieu auteur et type de l'humanité, qui, après l'avoir faite évidemment pour une fin excellente, ne l'abandonnera pas dans le développement mystérieux de sa destinée."

This somewhat vague idealism, which admirably suited the Romantics in so far as they felt the need of a philosophy, was soon to be replaced by the positivism of Auguste Comte, whose works—though by their date they fall within this period and owe much to Saint-Simon—can hardly be said to have become a force in the life and thought of the French nation until after 1850.

In conclusion, it is worth pointing out the important part played during this period by the Sorbonne and by the Collège de France as centres for the propagation of ideas. Between 1815 and 1830

TWO GREAT  
CENTRES FOR  
THE PROPAGATION OF  
IDEAS

"the Sorbonne triumvirat"—the term is

Brunetière's—Cousin, Guizot, and Villemain, attracted large crowds to their lectures, the first by his

1. THE SORBONNE

denunciation of materialism and his clear exposition of the history of philosophy; the second by his brilliant interpretation of the philosophy of French civilization throughout the ages, and the third by his attempt—the first of its kind—to give a course of lectures on comparative literature. After 1830 these three professors forsook their university chairs for the political arena, and later each was at one time or another Minister of Education. Their posts in the university were filled by men of lesser calibre, and the Sorbonne ceded its place as a centre of intellectual attraction to the Collège de France, where, after

1830, Michelet, Quinet, and Mickiewicz, professors respectively of history, southern and Slavonic literatures, transformed their chairs

into pulpits, whence they preached the gospel of democracy and of romantic humanitarianism. Michelet and his friend Quinet we shall meet again among the historians, but Mickiewicz deserves a special mention here because he introduced a curious Polish doctrine into his democratic and humanitarian teaching which was not without influence on the later Romantic writers, notably on Lamennais, Michelet, Quinet, and George Sand, who attended his lectures at the Collège de France.

Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) was one of the three great

Adam  
Mickiewicz  
(1798–1855)

poets of the Polish Romantic Movement, the other two being Krasinski and Slowacki. The failure of the Polish rising in 1831 led to emigration on a large scale, including the best and most intellectual elements of the country. When in 1832 Mickiewicz came to Paris, the chief centre of the Polish emigration, he immediately became the spiritual and intellectual leader of his exiled compatriots, and it was for them that he wrote his famous *Book of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrims*,<sup>1</sup> in which he adjured them not to regard themselves

<sup>1</sup> Translated into French by Montalembert, and the model for Lamennais' *Paroles d'un Croyant*.

as exiles or refugees, but as "pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land of Liberty." For he believed that it was only through the untiring heroism and self-sacrifice of each individual Pole that Poland, the Christ among nations slain to redeem the sins of the rest of Europe, would be enabled to rise again to usher in the spiritual era of the Universe, when materialism will be a thing of the past, and all nations rule and work together in brotherly love. This belief in the Messianic mission of the Polish nation, or Messianism, as it came to be called, was not peculiar to Mickiewicz, but was shared at the time by nearly all the poets and thinkers of that martyred country, who held that it was the only possible explanation for the unavenged wrong of the destruction of Poland's existence as a nation. Mickiewicz had not long been appointed to the newly-founded professorship of Slavonic at the Collège de France (1840) before he began to preach this national mysticism to his audience, composed of brother-Poles and of the intellectual élite of Paris, and as a corollary to it he popularized the idea that universal truths at times become incarnate in peoples and in individuals, an idea which finds an echo in the works of Michelet, Quinet, Leroux, and George Sand, and the further idea that all great benefactors of mankind, whether they be nations or persons, are doomed to expiate their high daring with martyrdom.

The belief in Poland's mission and resurrection finds beautiful expression in Lamennais' *Hymne à la Pologne*, a prose-poem with the refrain :

"Dors, ô ma Pologne, dors en paix, dans ce qu'ils appellent ta tombe ; moi, je sais que c'est ton berceau."

Other writers, notably Michelet and Quinet, applied many of the Messianic attributes to France,<sup>1</sup> regarding her as a Christ among nations, "humanity's right arm," destined to redeem the rest of Europe through her gospel of the Rights

<sup>1</sup> This was an extension of the medieval Catholic tradition still accepted by De Maistre, which taught that the French were the chosen people of God—*Gesta Dei per francos*.

of Man. Why the disasters of Waterloo and of 1815 ? asks Quinet. Because—

“ Comme tous les grands inventeurs . . . comme Prométhée . . . comme Christophe Colomb . . . la France devait donner la Révolution au monde et payer son bienfait par un jour de mort.”



## CHAPTER IV

### THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL OF POETRY

SINCE subjectivity was the keynote of the romantic spirit, it was natural that Romanticism should have found its most perfect and its most original expression in lyrical poetry. A slender little volume of verse, published anonymously in 1820, was the first masterpiece of the new school, and with its author we will begin.

Alphonse Louis-Marie de Lamartine (1790-1869) belonged to an old Burgundy family and was born at **LAMARTINE** Macon. He spent a happy childhood with his (1790-1869) five sisters at his father's country house at Milly in the Maconnais hills, where his early education was superintended by his mother, who gave him his first reading-lessons from an illustrated Bible, and by an Abbé of a romantic turn of mind who had a great influence on Lamartine's dawning imagination. Later he was sent to complete his studies at the Jesuit seminary at Belley, where he spent several blissfully happy years. His school-life over, he lived four years of studious leisure at Milly, revelling in country sights and sounds, writing verses daily in the best eighteenth-century style, and finding food for his imagination in the Bible and in the works of Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, Petrarch, Tasso, Ossian, and Young, to mention only the chief writers who later influenced his poetry.

Sent in 1811 for a tour in Italy to cure him of a youthful infatuation, he at Naples conceived another for a little cigarette-maker, whom he afterwards idealized in *Graziella*. In a melancholy and agitated frame of mind he returned

home in 1812 by way of Switzerland in order to visit the scenes depicted in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. For the next two years Lamartine took service in the guard of Louis XVIII, and became a familiar figure in royalist circles. In 1816 he was sent to Aix-les-Bains for his health, and here he fell in love with a delicate Creole lady, Madame Julie Charles, whose death the following year inspired most of the best poems of his first volume of verse, *Les Méditations poétiques* (1820). These first *Méditations* took the French public by storm, as no book had done since Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, and Lamartine found himself famous in a day.

The same year he was appointed to a diplomatic post at Naples, and married a young Englishwoman, Marianne Birch, who brought him a considerable dowry. Lamartine remained only a year at Naples, and from 1821 to 1825 he lived quietly at the Château de Saint-Point, near Macon, which his father had presented to him on the occasion of his marriage. Here he prepared a new and enlarged edition of the *Premières Méditations*, and composed *La Mort de Socrate* and *Les Nouvelles Méditations*. In 1825 he was appointed secretary to the French Embassy in Florence, where he made the acquaintance of Manzoni, and the same year appeared *Le dernier chant du pèlerinage d'Harold*, inspired by the death of Byron at Missolonghi. In 1829 Lamartine, who had held aloof from the literary controversies of the day, was elected a member of the French Academy, and the following year he published his *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*. On the fall of Charles X, Lamartine abandoned his diplomatic career, and, after having vainly sought election to Parliament in 1832, chartered a vessel and set out with his wife and daughter for a voyage to the East—of which he gave his impressions in *Le Voyage en Orient* (1835). During his absence he was returned to the chamber as deputy for Bergues (Nord), and on his return to France in 1833, saddened by the death of his daughter on the outward journey, Lamartine threw himself heart and soul into politics, and soon made a name for himself as an orator. His leisure, however, was still devoted to poetry: two

narrative poems belong to this period—*Jocelyn* (1836), *La Chute d'un Ange* (1838), and a volume of lyrics—*Les Recueils poétiques* (1839), which closed his career as a poet. Henceforward Lamartine was drawn more and more towards republican and humanitarian ideas, to which he gave expression in his public speeches and his *Histoire des Girondins* (1847), which helped to prepare the Revolution of 1848. As a member of the Provisional Government of 1848, by his courage and eloquence Lamartine seemed to his countrymen the very incarnation of the Republican spirit, and for three months he was virtually the Dictator of France. But his influence declined swiftly, and on the establishment of the Second Empire in 1851 he retired from politics altogether. Impoverished by princely expenditure, unwise speculations, and unfailing generosity, Lamartine's last years were spent in straitened circumstances, writing historical and critical works, and doing political hack-work for magazines with a view to freeing himself from debt. His last purely literary works were all in prose: his autobiographical novels—*Raphaël* (1849), *Le Tailleur de Pierres de Saint-Point* (1851), and *Graziella* (1852), and his autobiography proper—*Les Confidences* (1849) and *Les Nouvelles Confidences* (1851). He died in his eightieth year in poverty and loneliness in the midst of a literary movement to which he was a complete stranger.

Perhaps no one ever expressed better the novelty of the *Premières Méditations* than Lamartine himself when he wrote in the Preface of 1849:

“Je suis le premier qui ai fait descendre la poésie du Parnasse, et qui ai donné à ce qu'on nommait la muse, au lieu d'un lyre à sept cordes de convention, les fibres même du cœur de l'homme, touchées et émues par les innombrables frissons de l'âme et de la nature.”

→ Lamartine was gifted in a supreme degree with what Paul Bourget calls “l'imagination des états de l'âme,” with the power of provoking and prolonging these moods, and with giving them a rare musical interpretation. The haunting caressing music,

Quality of  
Lamartine's  
poetry

the intense personal emotion, and the extreme simplicity of such poems as *Le Lac*, *L'Isolement*, *L'Automne*, *Le Ballon*, etc., came as a refreshing revelation to a generation which had not yet forgotten the horrors of the Revolution, and which had been wearied by the spectacular splendours of the Empire. "Lamartine n'était pas seulement un poète, c'était la poésie même," said Théophile Gautier.

"Je chantais, mes amis, comme l'homme respire,  
Comme l'oiseau gémit, comme le vent soupire,  
Comme l'eau murmure en coulant."

—*Le poète mourant.*

The result was a poetry "intime, personnelle, méditative et grave"—the epithets are Lamartine's own—a series of impassioned recollections of the emotions he experienced when brought face to face with love, nature, and death. The sense of infinity and eternity which fills him at such moments is at the root of his vague but deep religious rapture.

The love of which Lamartine sings, inspired by Julie Charles—the Elvire of the poems—is the love  
His love-poetry his master, Petrarch, had for Laura—the ideal Platonic love which lasts beyond the grave, and which, though it leaves the survivor lamenting, is to him in itself a proof of immortality.

"D'ici je vois la vie, à travers un nuage,  
S'évanouir pour moi dans l'ombre du passé.  
L'amour seul est resté, comme une grande image  
Survit seule au réveil dans un songe effacé.  
Repose-toi, mon âme, en ce dernier asile,  
Ainsi qu'un voyageur qui, le cœur plein d'espoir,  
S'assied avant d'entrer aux portes de la ville  
Et respire un moment l'air embaumé du soir."

—*Le Vallon.*  
VALLON

Thus death, which was to Victor Hugo a mystery full of terror and to Vigny the beginning of eternal oblivion, was acclaimed by Lamartine as a triumphal entry into immortality.

Lamartine loves nature as the witness and consoler of human sorrow :

“ Mais la nature est là qui t'invite et qui t'aime ” ;

for the contrast between her serene immutability and the vicissitudes of human life—

“ Quand tout change pour toi la nature est la même,”  
and because in nature he finds God :

“ Sous la nature enfin découvre son auteur.”

Lamartine has also the artist's love of nature, and though he gives us no detailed descriptions of natural scenery, he is extraordinarily skilful in suggesting an atmosphere, in sketching a background which is quickly filled in by the reader's imagination. Like Wordsworth, he spiritualizes material nature, transposing visible forms into thoughts and feelings :

Nature in  
Lamartine's  
poetry

“ Ces vents qui du mélèze au rameau dentelé  
Sortent comme un soupir à demi consolé.”

He makes a sparing use of images, and when he feels the need of one he generally chooses it from such formless moving things as air, wind, and water, or from flying birds and shifting clouds :

“ Tout ce qui monte enfin, qui flotte ou vole ou plane.”

Colour has no appeal for him—blacks and whites and greys are his medium—and his landscapes have the veiled and subdued quality of Corot's paintings. Sounds, on the other hand, find a large place in his poetry, more especially melancholy or indefinite sounds like the rustling of trees, the murmur of water, the sighing of reeds, the moaning of the wind. His vague landscapes are nearly all autumnal, and captured at a late evening hour when—

“ Les brises du matin se posent pour domrir,  
Le rivage se tait, la voile tombe vide,  
La mer roule à ses bords la nuit dans chaque ride,  
Et tout ce qui chantait semble à présent gémir.”

—*Harmonies poétiques.*



One can scarcely lay too much stress on this aspect of Lamartine's poetry because it is the essential quality of his genius to dematerialize everything that he touches, so truly does he say of himself—

“Au monde des esprits je monte sans efforts.”

To hear his poetry read aloud is almost to forget that he uses words at all, and so fluid is the music of his verse that the abstraction of his vocabulary, and certain pseudo-classical circumlocutions such as “le char de la nuit” and “l'arbre du jour,” pass almost unnoticed.

It is as the poet of the *Premières* and the *Nouvelles Méditations* that Lamartine is chiefly loved and read to-day. His later *Harmonies religieuses et poétiques* and *Recueils poétiques* are, in respect of technique, superior to his earlier collections, and reveal a great philosophical and religious poet, preoccupied with humanitarian ideals. Like his two narrative poems *Jocelyn* and *La Chute d'un Ange*, they form the link between Lamartine the lyrical poet, pure and simple, and Lamartine the orator, to whom poetry is no longer the breath of life but “le plus beau et le plus intense des actes de la pensée mais le plus court et celui qui dérobe le moins de temps au travail du jour.” (Pref. to *Recueils*.) Yet once a poet, always a poet, and even as late as 1857 we find such an unforgettable example of the essential Lamartine as the following :

“De la solitaire demeure  
Une ombre lourde d'heure en heure  
Se détache sur le gazon ;  
Et cette ombre, couchée et morte,  
Est la seule chose qui sorte  
Tout le jour de cette maison.”

—*La Vigne et la Maison.*

Victor Hugo was born at Besançon in the year that Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* took France by storm. His father, who came originally from Lorraine, was an officer in the armies of Napoleon, and his mother the daughter of a royalist

VICTOR HUGO  
(1802-1885)

LIFE

1802

shipowner at Nantes. While still a baby, Victor Hugo, with his mother and two elder brothers, accompanied Major Hugo from garrison to garrison, halting at Elba and Corsica just when the child was of an age to take notice of the things around him. The year 1807 was spent at Avellino, of which province Hugo, now a Colonel, had been made governor. A year later he followed Joseph Bonaparte to his new kingdom of Spain, while Madame Hugo took her two younger boys, Eugène and Victor, to Paris, where she rented a roomy old house with a wild garden, part of a forsaken convent of the Order of the Feuillantines. Here the children ran wild to their heart's content, and learned their first lessons from an ex-Oratorian, the Père de la Rivière.

" J'eus dans ma blonde enfance, hélas trop éphémère,  
Trois maîtres—un jardin, un vieux prêtre et ma mère."

In 1811 they took a journey across the Pyrenées to Madrid to visit their father, who was now governor of that city and Count of the Empire. The boys were sent to the College of Nobles at Madrid, where they came into contact with Spaniards of the bluest blood and learnt something of Spanish pride and Spanish courtesy. The following April they were back again at Les Feuillantines, revelling in the garden, and resuming their pleasant easy-going lessons with the Père de la Rivière ; but when General Hugo returned to France in 1814, he sent both his younger sons as boarders to the Pension Cordier, so that they might receive a sound general education before entering the Ecole Polytechnique. Here Victor remained until his sixteenth year, developing a marked aptitude for mathematics, and a passionate love of literature. While still at school he tried his hand at every form of verse, and always found for "*ces bêtises que je faisais avant ma naissance*," as he afterwards labelled his earliest literary efforts, a sympathetic listener in his mother, who was the first to recognize her son's poetic bent. Already in 1816 he wrote in one of his copy-books : "*Je veux être Chateaubriand ou rien*," and the following year he received an honourable mention from the French Academy for an

essay on "The happiness procured by study in all conditions of life." At seventeen "l'enfant sublime," as Chateaubriand is reported to have called him, was awarded a prize by the Académie des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse for a poem entitled *Les Vierges de Verdun*. In 1818 the eighteen-year-old Victor Hugo decided definitely on a literary career, and founded with his two brothers *Le Conservateur Littéraire*, which brought him into touch with a group of young men eager to renew the literature of France. A year after the death of his mother in 1821, Victor Hugo married his former playmate, Adèle Foucher, who had shared the delights of the garden at Les Feuillantines, and bought her wedding gift—the then essential cashmere shawl—from the proceeds of his first book of verses, *Odes et poésies diverses* (1822), later re-edited and enlarged with the title *Odes et Ballades*.

The part played by Hugo in the Romantic battle has been told elsewhere, and a study of his dramas and novels will follow in its proper place. But he was first and foremost a poet, and the twenty-five volumes of verse included in the *édition définitive* of his complete works are so intimately bound up with his life and thought, private and political, that they form an essential part of the biography of one who truly said of himself :

"Tout souffle, tout rayon ou propice ou fatal,  
Fait reluire et vibrer mon âme de cristal,  
Mon âme aux mille voix, que le Dieu que j'adore  
Mit au centre de tout comme un écho sonore."

The *Odes* of 1822 and 1824 and the *Odes et Ballades* of 1826 and 1828 already contain poems dictated by what were to be Victor Hugo's perennial sources of inspiration—historical and political events: Napoleon Bonaparte (*Les deux îles*; *Ode à Colonne*); his belief in the poet's mission (*Le poète*, etc.); the record of his own dreams and feelings to which Book V, with its motto "Prend-moy tel que je suy," is entirely devoted, and his love of children (*Portrait d'un*

VICTOR HUGO'S  
EARLY  
POETICAL  
WORKS

*Odes et Ballades*  
(1826)

*enfant*). For this collection Victor Hugo wrote no less than four successive prefaces, in which he maintains that "la poésie est tout ce qu'il y a d'intime en tout," and that poets are priests, "chantant les grandes choses de leur religion et de leur patrie," taking nature as their model and truth as their guide. He concludes with the fervent hope that "un jour le dix-neuvième siècle politique et littéraire, pourra être résumé d'un mot : la liberté dans l'ordre, la liberté dans l'art." The *Odes* are still classical in form, and are somewhat marred by an excess of apostrophe, exclamation, and other rhetorical devices, while the *Ballades* inspired by the Middle Ages are chiefly remarkable for the novelty and variety of their metrical effects. (*Le pas d'armes du roi Jean, La Chasse du Burgrave, La fille du Timbalier.*)

The *Odes et Ballades* were followed at the beginning of 1829 by a collection of a very different kind, *Les Orientales* (1829), inspired by the Greek War of Independence, in which Byron had laid down his life, though the original idea of writing these Eastern poems had quite another source, for, as Victor Hugo tells us in his inevitable preface : "L'idée d'écrire *Les Orientales* m'a pris d'une façon assez ridicule l'été passé en allant voir coucher le soleil." During 1827 and 1828 the little group of artists and poets who formed the Cénacle would often sally forth in the evening to watch the sun set behind the dome of the Invalides, or climb up to the towers of Notre-Dame for the same purpose, and it is the splendour of these sunsets awakening in Victor Hugo recollections of Naples and of Spain which gave him the first idea of the *Orientales*. He had never been in the East, but as he remarks : L'Espagne c'est encore l'Orient, l'Espagne est à demi-africaine, l'Afrique est à demi-asiatique," and with a little help from pictures and newspaper reports he created pictures of an unreal but intensely imagined East in poems which for their effect depend on their riot and blaze of colour ("C'est de la poésie pour les yeux," said the *Globe*) and on their astonishing variety and suppleness of rhythm (*Les Djinns, Grenade, Le feu du ciel*). In this volume Hugo for the first time makes



use of all his favourite devices : enumeration, antithesis, and plastic images, of which the following is a typical example :

"Cent coupoles d'<sup>t.</sup>étain qui dans l'ombre étincellent  
Comme des casques de géants."

Two of the last poems in the book, *Rêverie* and *Novembre*, form the link between this and his next collection of verse,

*Les Feuilles d'Automne*, which, appearing in the glorious year 1831, the year of *Marion Delorme* and *Notre Dame de Paris*, was written in a

*Les Feuilles  
d'Automne  
(1831)*

mood of retrospect and detachment, when Victor Hugo, saddened by his break with Sainte-Beuve, hitherto his greatest friend, and by the closing chapter of his first youth, casts "un regard mélancolique et résigné çà et là sur ce qui est, surtout ce qui a été" (Preface). The July Revolution precipitated a crisis in Victor Hugo's political opinions which, under the influence of his father and the general turn of events, had been slowly preparing for some time, and after 1830 he was as ardent a liberal democrat as in the early twenties he had been an ardent royalist. Most of the poems in *Les Feuilles d'Automne* were written before the Revolution of July. In this collection political allusions are few and far between, but both in the poems and the preface there are signs that Victor Hugo's early political convictions are dying within him, and this uncertainty adds another chord of melancholy to his lyre :

"Après avoir chanté j'écoute et je contemple,  
A l'empereur tombé dressant dans l'ombre un temple,  
Aimant la liberté pour ses fruits, pour ses fleurs,  
Le trône pour son droit, le roi pour ses malheurs ;  
Fidèle enfin au sang qu'ont versé dans ma veine,  
Mon père vieux soldat, ma mère vendéenne."

These are the closing lines of "*Ce siècle avait deux ans*," the short autobiographical poem with which the book opens, and nearly all the other pieces are what Victor Hugo himself calls them, "des vers de l'intérieur de l'âme," singing of nature (*Ce qu'on entend sur la Montagne, Soleils couchants, Pan*) ; man's destiny (*Où donc est le bonheur, La Pente de la*



rêverie) ; humanity (*Pour les Pauvres, La Prière pour tous*) ; the grace and beauty of childhood (*Laissez tous ces enfants sont bien là, Lorsque l'enfant paraît*). In *Les Feuilles d'Automne* it is as though the poet were making a halt at a cross-road of life—to use an image of his own from the poem entitled *A mes amis L.B. and S.-B.*

“Que faire et que penser ? Nier, douter ou croire ?  
Carrefour ténébreux ! triple route ! nuit noire !  
Le plus sage s'assied sous l'arbre du chemin  
Disant : j'irai Seigneur où tu m'envoies.  
Il espère, et, de loin, dans les trois sombres voies,  
Il écoute, pensif, marcher le genre humain.”

But even in this spirit of detachment, Victor Hugo has not quite forgotten his mission “d'être en la nuit de tous un éclatant flambeau,” and the last poem of the book, which is a plea for all oppressed nations, ends with the lines :

“Oh ! la muse se doit aux peuple sans défense.  
J'oublie alors l'amour, la famille, l'enfance,  
Et les molles chansons, et le loisir serein,  
Et j'ajoute à ma lyre une corde d'airain !”

His three next volumes of verse, *Les Chants du Crépuscule* (1835), *Les Voix intérieures* (1837), and *Les Rayons et les Ombres* (1840), despite their misty titles and the many intimate poems they contain, amply fulfil this promise. Here, true to his maxim, “être de tous les partis par leur côté généreux, n'être d'aucun par leur côté mauvais,”<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo couples enthusiasm for democracy with pity for the Bourbons, and humanitarian hopes with the glorification of Napoleon. Here, too, are poems celebrating the civilizing rôle of the artist :

“ . . . Comme un prêtre à l'église,  
Il rêve à l'art qui charme, à l'art qui civilise,  
Qui change l'homme un peu,  
Et qui, comme un semeur qui jette au loin sa graine

---

<sup>1</sup> *Voix intérieures* (Préface, 1837).

En semant la nature à travers l'âme humaine  
Y fera germer Dieu."

—A Eugène, Vicomte H—— Voix intérieures.

In the two finest poems of *Les Chants du Crépuscule*—the second *Ode à la Colonne*, written to commemorate the transport to France of the Emperor's remains, and *Napoléon II*—Victor Hugo helped to popularize the Napoleonic legend, and in the next two volumes, together with a certain number of stately national odes, are numbers of purely lyrical poems on the theme which in *Les Feuilles d'Automne* he had made peculiarly his own (*Ce qui se passait aux Feuillantines, La Tristesse d'Olympio, A des Oiseaux envolés*). To these must be added a new source of inspiration—the beauty, wonder, and terror of the sea—*Soirée en mer, Une nuit qu'on entendait la mer sans la voir, and Oceano Nox* with its grand and melancholy music :

"O flots, que vous avez de lugubres histoires !  
Flots profonds, redoutés des mères à genoux !  
Vous vous les racontez en montant les marées,  
Et c'est ce qui vous fait ces voix désespérées  
Que vous avez le soir quand vous venez vers nous."

From 1840 to 1853 Victor Hugo wrote no more lyrical poetry.

In 1841 he was elected a member of the French Academy. His growing belief that the poet should be a force in the world, very strongly expressed in *Les Rayons et les Ombres (Fonction du poète)*, led him to throw himself more and more into politics, and very characteristically his *Discours de Réception*, leaving literary matters untouched, was a brief survey of French history since the Revolution. The following year on politics bent Victor Hugo made a journey to the Rhine to clear up his ideas on the burning question of the hour as to whether France should repudiate the treaty of 1815 and claim the Left Bank as her own. The result was *Le Rhin*, a book in the form of letters to a friend in Paris, and *Les Burgraves*, a drama which, when performed early in 1843, was as great a failure as *Hernani* had been a success.

This, and later in the year the death in a boating accident of his daughter Léopoldine with her husband of a few brief months, filled the poet's cup to overflowing. For the next eleven years his mind was occupied with neither drama nor poetry but with political and social questions: the abolition of capital punishment, the amelioration of the condition of the poor, universal education, etc. Created a peer of France by Louis Philippe in 1845, he discoursed on all these subjects in the House, and his utterances are to be found in *Actes et Paroles* (published posthumously). After the Revolution of 1848 he sat in the Constituent Assembly, and he was one of those who in 1851 unsuccessfully resisted the *coup d'état* by which Louis Napoleon prepared the way for the Second Empire. His point of view, expressed fully and violently many years later in *L'Histoire d'un Crime* (1877), caused his immediate banishment from France. He took refuge for a short time in Belgium; then in Jersey (1852-1855) where his family joined him. Later Guernsey became the home of his exile until the fall of the Second Empire in 1870.

In his first island home Victor Hugo once more took up his pen, this time to write the prose-*invective*, HIS LATER POEMS *Napoléon le Petit* (1852), and to discharge his civic indignation in the lyrical satires of *Les Châtiments* (1853), dictated by an almost elemental hatred of the perpetrator of the "Crime of December."

Les Châtiments (1853) Furious invective alternates with stinging satire, threats of future punishment for Louis Napoleon and his accomplices, with hopes for the future of France (*Patria, Lux*). Here and there comes a lull in the storm with poems of an epic grandeur (*L'Expiation, O soldats de l'an deux*), or with a calm meditative poem like *Stella*, and then the lashing satire begins again. The satirical note still makes

itself heard occasionally in *Les Contemplations* (1856), which is generally regarded as the masterpiece of Hugo's lyrical collections. Personal reminiscences, the mystery and immensity of the sea, the horror and pity of death, brought close to him by the loss

of Léopoldine, grief and indignation at the thought of social inequality and injustice, his social, political, and religious ideals, his faith in progress—these are the chief sources of inspiration of a book which is perhaps the most personal that Victor Hugo ever wrote, and which is most admirably characterized in two lines from its last poem :

“ Je sens le vent de l’infini souffler  
Sur ce livre qu’emplit l’orage et le mystère.”

—*A celle qui est restée en France.*

In 1859 came the first series of the *Légende des Siècles*, to be followed by two more in 1877 and 1883, “ a collection of poems epic and dramatic in inspiration but lyric in form,” arranged with a view to illustrating human progress, “ l’immense marcheur jamais découragé,” throughout the ages. Unfortunately, Victor Hugo, like his forerunners of the eighteenth century, believed that there was a necessary connection between industrial and scientific progress and the moral ascent of man. But the unsoundness of his underlying thesis in no wise detracts from the beauty and grandeur of the individual poems. From the birth of Eve to the death of Christ ; from the gods of Olympus to the barbarian kings ; thence through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the poet’s own day, with a glance into the immediate future and into eternity, the vast cycle of the ages unwinds before us in a brilliant succession of pictures and visions (cf. particularly *La Conscience*, *Booz endormi*, *Aymerillot*, *L’Aigle du Casque*, *Les Chevaliers errants*, *La Rose de l’Infante*, *Les Pauvres Gens*, *Pleine Mer*, *Plein Ciel*).

The last poems, written by Victor Hugo in exile, were collected under the title *Chansons des Rues et des Boisés* (1865), a book, he tells us, “ écrit beaucoup avec le rêve, un peu avec le souvenir.”

On the fall of the Empire (1870), Victor Hugo returned to France, and gave his impressions of the siege of Paris in the prose *Choses Vues* and the lyrical *L’Année Terrible* (1872). From the sadness caused by the death of his wife (1868) and of his sons, Charles (1871)



and François-Victor (1873), and the unhappy plight of his native land, the poet sought solace in the companionship of his little grandchildren, Georges and Jeanne, who inspired the delightful lyrical collection *L'Art d'être grand-père* (1877).

From his return to France to the day of his death, Victor Hugo, now a convinced Republican, was the idol of the French people, and when he died at the age of eighty-three, he was mourned by a whole nation. A few years before his death he had published another volume of verse, *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit*, "vie, amour, joie et courroux," and yet another was to follow posthumously, *Toute la Lyre*, which would be an admirable title for the twenty-five volumes of his collected poetical works.

The bulk and range of Victor Hugo's poetry take one's breath away, and he paid the penalty for his prodigality; there is much in his work for the critic to carp and cavil at—his vehemence and frequent want of dignity, his fondness for declamation, his abuse of antithesis and enumeration. Faguet complains of this habit of accumulating "des énumérations brillantes des titres d'idées, sans en écrire le chapitre. Il dit : Liberté ! Justice ! Humanité ! Progrès ! sans nous dire assez quel est son progrès, quelles sa liberté et sa justice, ce qui seul importerait." For Victor Hugo was not a profound or an original thinker, though no poet of the nineteenth century put into circulation so many of the ideas of his age, or clothed them in such imaginative form. Two more defects of intelligence and we can pass on to the poet's undisputed merits, which far outweigh his failings : Hugo was inordinately vain, and a sense of humour had been completely denied to him. Heine remarked that he was not merely an egoist, but a Hugoist, and as time went on he conceived of himself as the hero of a Hugo legend, no less wondrous than the Napoleonic legend which he had done so much to create. Of his pompousness and complete lack of humour numerous instances might be given. Two may suffice : his intro-

*L'Art d'être  
grand-père  
(1877)*

*Les Quatre  
Vents de  
l'Esprit (1881)*

*Toute la Lyre  
(1888-1893)*

Hugo's weak-  
nesses as a  
poet



ductory note to *L'Histoire d'un Crime*—"Ce livre est plus qu'actuel ; il est urgent. Je le publie," and two extant photographs of himself in ecstatic attitudes inscribed by his own hand, the one "Victor Hugo écoutant Dieu," the other "Victor Hugo causant avec Dieu."

But when all is said, the fact remains that Victor Hugo is a great poet—great because of his lyric and <sup>His undoubted merits</sup> imaginative genius, great because he is the poetic voice of the whole nineteenth century.

His two supreme gifts as a poet are his extraordinary visual imagination and his feeling for the music and colour of words, so that, to quote Dowden, "sensations created images and words created ideas." In other words, Victor Hugo habitually thought in images, and one has only to turn over the leaves of any one of his twenty-five volumes of verse to find on every page examples of the wealth of his plastic imagination :

"Les mauvaises pensées  
Qui passent dans l'esprit comme une ombre sur l'eau."  
—*La Prière pour tous.*

Comparing a poet's songs to a peal of bells he cries :

"Dans son dur voyage ils soutiennent  
Le peuple immense pélerin ;  
Vos chants, vos songes, vos pensées  
Semblent des urnes renversées  
D'où tombent des rythmes d'airain."  
—*Année Terrible.*

For perfect harmony between sound and sight no better example can be given than the well-known *Saison des Semailles*, *Le Soir* (*Chansons des Rues et des Bois*) and the delicious *Nuits de Juin* (*Rayons et Ombres*) with its last wonderful lines :

"Et l'aube douce et pâle, en attendant son heure,  
Semble toute la nuit errer au bas du ciel."

Or again :

"Au loin une cloche, une enclume  
Jettent dans l'air leurs faibles coups  
A ses pieds flottent dans la brume  
Le paysage immense et doux."

—*Toute la Lyre*, I, 133.

Well might Victor Hugo say :

"Le rythme est dans l'espace  
Et la lyre est en nous."

—*Toute la Lyre*, I, p. 55.

We have already noted incidentally Victor Hugo's favourite lyric themes : public events, domestic joys and sorrows, nature in all her moods, the sea, childhood. His love poems, with the exception of one or two songs like *S'il est un charmant gazon* and *L'Aube naît et la porte est close* (*Chants du Crépuscule*), have no ring of sincerity or passion. On the other hand, the older he grew, the more frequent became the poems dictated by a feeling of love and pity for all the weak and oppressed, be they nations, human beings, or animals. In *L'Art d'être grand-père* he writes :

"Mon cœur n'a pas de frontières, et je n'ai pas d'endroit  
Où finisse l'amour des petits et le droit  
Des faibles et l'appui qu'on doit aux misérables."

This humanitarianism at times became maudlin, and developed into false sentiment, but it also inspired some of his finest verse, and was one more element in the poetry of a man whose life was described by Leconte de Lisle, on the occasion of his election to the dead poet's chair in the Académie Française, as—

"Un chant sonore, où toutes les passions, toutes les tendresses, toutes les sensations, toutes les colères généreuses qui ont agité, ému, traversé l'âme humaine dans le cours de ce siècle, ont trouvé une expression souveraine."

Alfred Victor, Comte de Vigny (1797-1863), came of a long line of soldiers, and was born at Loches in Touraine. His father was a veteran of the Seven Years War, and his mother an aristocrat

ALFRED DE  
VIGNY  
(1797-1863)

imprisoned with her family by the revolutionary government. After the Terror, M. de Vigny brought his wife and son to Paris, and at the age of sixteen Alfred entered the army as a lieutenant, to quit it in 1827 with the rank of captain, and without ever having been in action. His military career was a long series of disappointments.

“ Je m’aperçus que mes services n’étaient qu’une longue méprise et que j’avais porté dans une vie tout active une nature toute contemplative.”

In the meantime his literary taste had asserted itself, and he spent his leisure time writing verses and consorting with the members of Nodier’s Cénacle. His first collection of verse, *Poèmes* (1822), appeared just before Victor Hugo’s *Odes et Poésies Diverses*, and was re-edited and enlarged in 1826 under the title *Poèmes anciens et modernes*.

*Poèmes anciens et modernes* (1826) The other works published during his lifetime were novels, *Cinq Mars* (1826), *Stello* (1832), *Servitude et Grandeur militaire* (1835), and plays *Le Maréchal d’Ancre* (1831), *Chatterton* (1835).

In 1828 Alfred de Vigny married, like Lamartine, an English wife, Lydia Bunbury, and his marriage seems to have been as unsuccessful as his military career. Years before he had loved the beautiful Delphine Gay, and been loved in return, but his mother had wished for a more aristocratic wife for her son ; later he was to fall violently in love with the actress who took the part of Kitty Bell in *Chatterton*, Marie Dorval, whose standards of honour and fidelity fell far below his, and completely disillusioned him about women.

“ Car plus ou moins la femme est toujours Dalila.”

In 1845, two years after Victor Hugo, he was very discourteously received into the Académie Française. After the Revolution of 1848, like Chateaubriand, Lamartine and Victor Hugo, he had thoughts of a political career, but having twice unsuccessfully sought election to the National Assembly he abandoned all idea of public life and retired

to his Château du Maine-Guiraud in Angoulême, where he died in 1863, after a long illness, leaving behind him in manuscript his magnificent philosophical poems *Les Destinées*, *Les Destinées*, and a kind of diary of notes and jottings, fragments of which were published in 1867 with the title *Journal d'un poète*.

Vigny, the least typical of the Romantics, was, both as a man and as a poet, the very antithesis of Victor Hugo. He was far from lavish with his verse. His complete poetical works are comprised in one small volume, and if we exclude *Hélène* and *Fantasies oubliées*, which he never destined for publication, his fame as a poet rests on the thirty-five pieces of the *Poèmes anciens et modernes* and of *Les Destinées*. Concentration and economy also mark his use of his poetical gift. His interpretation of the destiny of man and of the place occupied in it by Nature, Love, and Death is the theme from which he never strays, and though this interpretation is intensely personal, there is something of detachment in his expression of it. Such avowals as he makes of his "moi" have the quality of reluctance, for the declamation and display, dear to most Romantics, were abhorrent to the proud and reserved Alfred de Vigny. This was partly due to temperament, partly to the poet's unwavering intellectual honesty. Among the Romantics he was the one original thinker, the one poet who had a consistent philosophy of life, to whom thought meant as much as feeling or possibly more. Thus, while Victor Hugo transforms feelings and sensations into ideas, Vigny starts from the abstract idea, to which he gives an emotional and imaginative value, by means of the symbol in which he clothes it (*Moïse*, *Eloa*, *La Mort du Loup*, *La Bouteille à la Mer*). Two of the finest of Vigny's non-symbolic poems are *Le Cor*, a half-narrative, half-lyrical poem on the death of Roland and Oliver, written whilst he was in garrison in the South of Spain, and *La Frégate "la Sérieuse"* (1828), with its wonderful description of a fight at sea.

Vigny was a pessimist and a solitary, partly because there

was a strong melancholy strain in his temperament (" Je suis né sérieux jusqu'à la tristesse "), but chiefly because he was a disillusioned idealist who after reasoned reflection had come to the conclusion that in a world made up of good and evil the evil far outbalances the good, in fact, that all is for the worst in the worst of possible worlds. The crowd whom he despises lack either the clear-sightedness or the intellectual honesty to perceive this—and so the elect of the earth, the geniuses, live in a moral isolation, which makes unhappiness their inevitable portion. This is the theme of Vigny's play *Chatterton* and of four of his greatest poems, *Moïse*, *Eloa*, *La Colère de Samson*, and *Le Mont des Oliviers* which, incidentally, are so many chapters of Vigny's own spiritual autobiography. The forlornness of genius is admirably expressed in the cry of Vigny's Moses :

" Que vous ai-je donc fait pour être votre élu ?  
J'ai conduit votre peuple où vous avez voulu . . .  
Je suis très grand, mes pieds sont sur les nations,  
Ma main fait et défait les générations.—  
Hélas ! je suis, Seigneur, puissant et solitaire,  
Laissez-moi m'endormir du sommeil de la terre."

Vigny's pessimism, which is a far sincerer and profounder thing than the subjective and emotional *mal du siècle* from which so many of his contemporaries suffered, affects his conception of nature and of God. Nature is far from being for him the consoler and confidante that she was for Lamartine and in a lesser degree for Victor Hugo.

" Ne me laissez jamais seul avec la nature  
Car je la connais trop pour n'en pas avoir peur,"

he exclaims in *La Maison du Berger*, for her dumb impassiveness fills him with horror :

" Je n'entends ni vos cris ni vos soupirs ; à peine  
Je sens passer sur moi la comédie humaine  
Qui cherche en vain au ciel ses muets spectateurs " ;

and in a letter to the Vicomtesse du Plessis (Aug. 8, 1848) he writes :



“ Pour moi, je ne lui pardonne son immobilité, son éternité impudente, sa fraîcheur et ses rajeunissements annuels sur les tombes de ceux qu'on aime, qu'en faveur de son silence et de ses magnifiques horizons.”

And Nature in this aspect is, in Vigny's view, but the reflection of her Maker, who, dumb, blind, and deaf, is either powerless or unwilling to help mankind through the vale of tears in which he has set their feet, and makes it difficult for man to help himself, on the one hand by limiting his intelligence—

“ Tout homme a vu le mur qui borne son esprit ”

(*La Flûte*)—

and on the other by making him powerless against death, which hangs ever over his head—

“ Comme une sombre épée

Attristant la nature à tout moment frappée.”

—*Le Mont des Oliviers.*

Yet this tragic conception of man's destiny wrings no cry of despair from Vigny, still less a helpless whimpering, but braces him to a fortitude which is almost sublime :

“ Muet, aveugle et sourd au cri des créatures,  
Si le Ciel nous laissa comme un monde avorté,  
Le juste opposera le dédain à l'absence,  
Et ne répondra plus que par un froid silence  
Au silence éternel de la Divinité.”

The resignation that Vigny preaches is made up of pride and a realization of the futility of resistance or indignation, while at the same time it is accompanied by a deep feeling of pity, not self-pity, but compassion for all the weak, the lonely, and the suffering, to whatever rank of life they belong ; and more than this, a sinking of personal suffering in the misery of the whole human race.

“ J'aime la majesté des souffrances humaines.”

This feeling of universal compassion is symbolized in *Eloa*, an angel of pity born of a tear of Christ falling on the tomb

of Lazarus—Eloa abandons the joys of heaven to bring consolation and salvation to the exiled Lucifer.

But the final word of Vigny's philosophy still remains to be given. In two of his last poems, *La Bouteille à la Mer* (1858) and *L'Esprit pur* (1863), shines the silver lining to the dark cloud of evil hanging over human destiny, a silver lining of which glimpses may be caught even in earlier poems (*Paris, La Maison du Berger*). God may be the author of a world which is evil and be indifferent to human suffering, but

“Le vrai Dieu, le Dieu fort est le Dieu des idées,”

and will not let perish a single fragment of the most real of all worlds, the world of ideas.

“... Dieu peut bien permettre a des eaux insensées  
De perdre des vaisseaux mais non pas des idées.”

This is the leading idea of *La Bouteille à la Mer*, which tells how a ship is lost with all hands, while the bottle to which the captain had consigned a chart of unknown and dangerous seas in which he was sailing, comes safe to port. For there is a realm—the invisible world of ideas—in which man may freely work out his own salvation—

“L'invisible est réel. Les âmes ont leur monde  
Où sont accumulés d'impalpables trésors”—

and with the help of these treasures of the mind he may some day sweep away the miserable ignorance into which he was born.

It was well worth while, that, to use a famous image of Sainte-Beuve's, unlike the other Romantics,

“Vigny plus secret  
Comme en un tour d'ivoire avant midi rentrait,”

to seek in a moral isolation of his own choosing a key to the riddle of the universe. Vigny may rightly claim to have been the first in France to write poetry in which “une pensée philosophique est mise en scène sous une forme

épique ou dramatique." His "ivory tower" had no windows on to that outward world of actuality which was such a rich source of inspiration to Hugo; for Vigny the message could only be thought out "above the battle," and his view of the poet's mission was Hugo's raised to a higher power.

Vigny's poetic art has an austerity and a restraint which are far to seek in the other Romantics. He has not Victor Hugo's verbal or rhythmical facility, and his conceptions are generally finer than his execution. Imagery and picturesqueness of phrase are never used for their own sake, but merely to give greater vividness to the underlying idea. For instance, when describing the long and perilous voyage of the bottle containing the navigator's precious information, he gives us the following picture :

"Les noirs chevaux de mer la heurtent puis reviennent  
La flairer avec crainte, et passent en soufflant."

And again, addressing Eva in *La Maison du Berger*, he uses the following beautiful image :

"Ton cœur vibre et résonne au cri de l'opprimé  
Comme dans une église aux austères silences  
L'orgue entend un soupir et soupire alarmé."

By the restraint, moderation, and detachment of his art, Alfred de Vigny is a forerunner of the Parnassian school, which he influenced in the persons of Leconte de Lisle and Sully Prudhomme.

If Lamartine may be said to be the most purely lyrical, Hugo the most imaginative, and Vigny the most intellectual of the Romantics, Alfred de Musset, the youngest of the group, is undoubtedly the most emotional, and combines two characteristics rarely found together—a sensibility so intense that it verges on morbidity, and a keen sense of humour; and in this respect he is the French counterpart of Heine.

The story of his life is soon told. Born and bred in

Paris, Musset was the son of a man who held a lucrative post in the Ministry of War, and who was well known as the biographer and editor of the works of J.-J. Rousseau. Poetry may be said to have been his natural inheritance, for he counted among his ancestors Ronsard's Cassandre and a kinsman of Joachim du Bellay, and still further back, possibly the *trouvère* Colin Muset. He was educated at the Lycée Henry IV, and, while still in his teens, was introduced to Hugo's Cénacle. At twenty he published the *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie* (1830), a collection of dramatic, narrative, and lyrical poems, which were included later in the *Premières Poésies* (1835). These poems scandalized conservative critics by their free use of *enjambement* and their display of Byronic cynicism, and were not altogether to the liking of the older Romantics, who deplored the poverty of their rimes, and who could not fail to perceive that in the *Ballade à la Lune*, and in several passages of *Mardoche*, their youngest recruit was poking fun at them.

Between 1833 and 1835 falls Musset's *liaison* with George Sand, whom he accompanied to Italy. The journey ended in disaster. Their temperaments were incompatible—the older and wiser George Sand soon wearied of the youthful poet's eccentricities, and Musset was jealous of his friend's devotion to her work. When he fell ill in Venice, she transferred her affections to his Venetian doctor, and after various attempts at reconciliation, Musset and George Sand parted for ever. This episode in his life, of which he gives an incoherent account in his *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle* (1836), aggravated the morbid violence of Musset's emotional nature, and transformed “le lord

*Nouvelles Poésies* Byronnet,” or “Mademoiselle Byron,” as his contemporaries called him, into the poet of *Les Nuits* (1835–1837), *L'Espoir en Dieu* (1838) and *Le Souvenir* (1841).

Musset had already written a number of short stories and plays, and some more were still to come, but during the last sixteen years of his life he wrote but sparingly

either in prose or in verse. He died at the age of forty-seven, prematurely worn out by drink and riotous living. "Musset s'absente trop," said a member of the Academy, shortly after the poet's election to that august body in 1852. "Il s'absinthe trop," corrected a fellow-Academician. Yet to the end Musset was a lovable creature, and his old servant remarked: "Dieu n'aurait pas le courage de le damner."

He was buried in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, under a willow, as he had desired:

" Mes amis, quand je mourrai,  
Plantez un saule au cimetière.  
J'aime son feuillage éploré,  
La pâleur m'en est douce et chère,  
Et son ombre sera légère  
A la terre où je dormirai."

The whole of Musset's poetical work is contained in two volumes—*Première Poésies* (1829–1835) and *Poésies Nouvelles* (1836–1852). Between the two lies his love-affair with George Sand, after which he renounced all appeal to the eye in his poetry, and devoted himself entirely to lyrical self-confession. Unhappy love and the suffering it brings is henceforth the theme, on which he plays a hundred variations, now eloquent, now fanciful, now jesting, but always graceful and sincere.

His philosophy, if such it may be called, is that love moves the world: cf. stanza in *Rolla* beginning—

" J'aime ! voilà le mot que la nature entière  
Crie au vent qui l'emporte, à l'oiseau qui le suit " ;

that man only attains to self-knowledge through grief and suffering—

" Rien ne nous rend si grands qu'une grande douleur "  
(Nuit de Mai) ;

" L'homme est un apprenti, la douleur est son maître  
Et nul ne se connaît tant qu'il n'a pas souffert "  
(Nuit d'Octobre) ;



and that short-lived happiness, or even suffering, may be the memory of them, will be the very life of his soul—

“O puissance du temps ! ô légères années !  
 Vous emportez nos pleurs, nos cris et nos regrets ;  
 Mais la pitié vous prend, et sur ces fleurs fânées  
 Vous ne marchez jamais.

“Je me dis seulement : ‘A cette heure, en ce lieu  
 Un jour je fus aimé, j’aimais, elle était belle.’  
 J’enfouis ce trésor dans mon âme immortelle  
 Et je l’emporte à Dieu.” —*Souvenir.*

Musset was the most introspective of all the Romantics, and his four *Nuits*, which alone would have secured him a high rank as a poet, are an interesting psychological study of the anguish he went through after his rupture with George Sand.

In *La Nuit de Mai* the poet is in a state of hopeless despair, and the Muse who visits him to suggest new themes of inspiration is repulsed in spite of her cry :

“Le plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux  
 Et j’en sais d’immortels qui sont de purs sanglots.”

Even the description of the pelican feeding her young fails to convince, and the poet has the last word :

“J’ai souffert un dur martyre  
 Et le moins que j’en pourrais dire  
 Si je l’essayais sur ma lyre,  
 La briserait comme un roseau.”

In *La Nuit de Décembre* Musset tells us of a curious hallucination which has been his since early childhood :

“Partout où j’ai voulu dormir,  
 Partout où j’ai voulu mourir,  
 Partout où j’ai touché la terre,  
 Sur ma route est venu s’asseoir  
 Un malheureux vêtu de noir  
 Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.”

And this wraith he interprets as his own moral solitude made visible. The *Nuit d’Août* strikes a more hopeful note.

This time the poet appeals to the Muse, not the Muse to the poet :

“Après avoir souffert il faut souffrir encore ;  
Il faut aimer sans cesse après avoir aimé.”

Finally, in the *Nuit d'Octobre*, the most beautiful of the series, the poet has attained a certain serenity and is more able to see things in their true proportion.

“Il est doux de sourire, il est doux de pleurer  
Au souvenir des maux qu'on pourrait oublier,”

he cries, and the Muse responds :

“Le coup dont tu te plains t'a préservé peut-être,  
Enfant ; car c'est par là que ton cœur s'est ouvert.”

The fact that Musset saw nothing in the universe except himself and his emotions makes him a Romantic of the Romantics :

“Le cœur humain de qui, le cœur humain de quoi,  
Mais morbleu ! . . . j'ai mon cœur humain moi.”  
—*Namouna*.

In other respects he differs widely from the other members of his school, at whom, indeed, he was rather fond of poking fun (cf. *Namouna*, *Simone*, *Réponse à M. Charles Nodier*), for he had, as we have seen, the sense of humour, and hence of proportion, which was denied to most of them. In the *Les Secrètes pensées de Rafaël* he hails the

Musset's place  
among the  
Romantics

“Classiques bien rasés à la face vermeille,  
Romantiques barbus aux visages blémis,”

and takes pride in his own catholicity of taste—

“Racine, rencontrant Shakespeare sur ma table,  
S'endort près de Boileau qui leur a pardonné ”—

admiring the classical writers for their universality and the

Romantics for their originality, and to a certain degree, at least, he combined these two characteristics in his own work. Nature meant nothing to Musset, nor did he care about the future progress of the world, and this differentiates him from Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Vigny. His range is narrower, his language much simpler than theirs, and his technique much less perfect. But he can be as musical as Lamartine when he chooses—as, for instance, in the delicious *Chanson de Fortunio*, which sings itself—and though he makes as sparing a use of metaphor as Vigny, he has a fine sense of the suggestive power of words, be they only proper nouns, as in the following symphonic picture, put into the mouth of the Muse in *La Nuit de Mai*:

“Voici la verte Ecosse et la brune Italie,  
Et la Grèce ma mère où le miel est si doux,  
Argos et Ptéléon, ville des hécatombes;  
Et Messa la divine agréable aux colombes;  
Et le front chevelu du Pélion changeant;  
Et le bleu Titarèse, et le golfe d'argent  
Qui montre dans ses eaux, où le cygne se mire,  
La blanche Oloosone à la blanche Camyre.”

In these lines the combination of plastic beauty, music, and the mysterious suggestiveness of geographical names is unsurpassed, if not unrivalled, in the French language.

Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, and Alfred de Musset are the greatest among the Romantic poets, and throw all the others into the shade, even Sainte-Beuve, whose charming *Poésies de Joseph Delorme* (1829), *Consolations* (1830), and *Pensées d'Août* (1837), simple meditative poems revealing a close observation of nature, owe much to the English Lake School of Poetry. Théophile Gautier (1811–1872) is sometimes classed with the four great poets of the age, but since his poetry, the best of which appeared after 1850, marks the transition from the emotional and subjective attitude of the Romantic school to the impersonal and objective manner of the Parnassians, it will be dealt with later.

In any strictly chronological survey of the romantic lyric in France, the very first name which deserves mention is that of a poetess. Madame Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859) Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859), singer and actress, when forced by the loss of her voice to leave the stage, sought consolation for this misfortune, and for an unhappy love-affair, in writing poetry. Her *Elégies et Romances*, which appeared in 1818, two years before Lamartine's *Premières Méditations*, were the first French lyrics of the nineteenth century with an unmistakable personal ring, and the first to express passion. Of this collection Sainte-Beuve wrote many years later: "Voilà un génie charmant, léger, plaintif, rêveur, désolé, le génie de l'élégie et de la romance qui se fait entendre sur ces tons pour la première fois; il ne doit rien qu'à son propre cœur." <sup>1</sup> And indeed Madame Desbordes-Valmore deserves a place in any anthology of elegiac verse.

"La tristesse est rêveuse et je rêve souvent!  
 La nature m'y porte, on la trompe avec peine.  
 Je rêve au bruit de l'eau qui se promène,  
 Au murmure du saule agité par le vent.  
 J'écoute. . . . Un souvenir répond à ma tristesse,  
 Un autre souvenir s'éveille dans mon cœur:  
 Chaque objet me pénètre, et répand sa couleur  
 Sur le sentiment qui m'opprime." <sup>2</sup>

Even this early volume is full of those musical phrases and delicate images which only come to the poet who is born, not made, and her later collections, *Elégies et Poésies Nouvelles* (1825), *Fleurs* (1834), *Pauvres Fleurs* (1837), and *Bouquets et Prières* (1843), in spite of certain inequalities, amply fulfil the promise of her first poetic venture.

Two little-read poets who represent the most extravagant phase of the French Romantic movement are Gérard de Nerval (1808-1885) Gérard de Nerval and Pétrus Borel. Gérard de Nerval (1808-1885), whose translation of *Faust* was greatly admired by Goethe, was a dreamer and

<sup>1</sup> *Portraits Contemporains*, ii.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Arbrisseau*.

a visionary, who lost his reason and died by his own hand, a victim to the sense of the supernatural which had haunted him all his life. *Les Cydalises* and *Chimères*, a sonnet sequence, reveal an intense mysticism and a rarity of form and expression which is not without obscurity.

Pétrus Borel (1809-1859) was a melodramatic Bohemian filled with a blind frenzy against the bourgeoisie and its fatal influence on art and letters. His announcement,

“Je prends mon Moi pour thème avec emportement,”

is more than fulfilled in *Rhapsodies* (1832), which, in spite of some fine verses, is an incoherent piece of work.

Three poets of this period, Barbier, Béranger, and Brizeux, the first only slightly connected with the Romantic school, the other two not at all, deserve a mention here.

Auguste Barbier (1805-1882) leapt suddenly into fame with his *Iambes* (1831-1832), which, inspired, like Auguste Barbier (1805-1882) Casimir Delavigne's *Messéniennes* (1818), by the political events of his day, reveal a vehement gift of picturesque satire, and are a lashing indictment of the worship of glory and the lust of political power, of which in the twenty-five years of his life he had already seen so much. The *Iambes* were followed by *Il Pianto* (1832), a collection of poems on the departed glories and later degradation of Italy, which Barbier had visited in company with the Breton poet, Brizeux; and *Lazare* (1833), the record of a visit to England, during which the poet was disagreeably impressed by the contrast between the splendour and luxury of the life of the rich and the misery and squalor in which the working classes lived.

Pierre Jean de Béranger (1780-1857), the political singer for the man in the street, and, like Hugo, a creator of the Napoleonic legend, stood quite outside the Romantic group, such literary taste as he possessed being purely pseudo-classical. His *Chansons* (1815-1833), democratic in tone and eminently singable, had an immense popularity in their day, their refrains



being in every mouth (cf. *Le Roi d'Yvetot*, *Les Souvenirs du Peuple*).

Auguste Brizeux (1803-1858), whose imagination had been filled from early childhood with the Celtic lore of his native Brittany—"la terre de granit recouverte de chênes"—and who is, perhaps, the first representative of regionalism in French literature, is inspired by the depth and passion of Celtic love in the graceful elegies of *Marie* (1831), and by the legends, traditions, and superstitions of Brittany and Celtic romance in *Les Bretons* (1845) and in *Histoires Poétiques* (1855).

## CHAPTER V

### THE ROMANTIC DRAMA

THE Romantics were less successful in the drama than in poetry or the novel, but the theatre was their chief battleground, and it was on the stage that they scored their popular though short-lived triumph.

Three influences affected the formation of French Romantic drama—the historical tragedy of other countries, notably of England and Germany; native melodrama; and the anti-classical obsession of Romantic dramatists and theorists.

Ever since the days of Voltaire, French dramatists, though they still clung to the framework of classical tragedy and obeyed its laws, had been endeavouring to introduce more movement, more variety, and more spectacle into their plays, and had chosen their subjects mainly from modern and medieval rather than from ancient history. Between 1800 and 1825 historical dramas of this kind were very numerous, the most important being Nepomucène Lemer cier's *Pinto* (1800), which dramatizes a twenty-four hours' revolution in Portugal, mingles comic and tragic episodes, and has a strong picturesque element; Casimir Delavigne's *Vêpres Siciliennes* (1819); and two tragedies by Pierre Lebrun—*Marie Stuart* (1820), inspired by Schiller, and *Le Cid d'Andalousie* (1825), the plot of which was borrowed from Lope de Vega. All these dramatists, who, as Musset later wittily remarked, "committed a romantic crime with extenuating circumstances," were influenced in their choice and treatment of plot by foreign playwrights, and most

of them owed a debt to Schiller. In 1822 a collection of plays, entitled *Chefs d'œuvre des théâtres étrangers* (1822), was hailed with delight, and when immediately after the appearance of Victor Hugo's dramatic manifesto, *La Préface de Cromwell*, a Shakespearean company, including Charles Kemble, Macready, and Miss Henrietta Smithson, visited Paris and gave performances in English of *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, etc., enthusiasm knew no bounds.

While historical dramatists of the pseudo-classical school were making their somewhat timid innovations, a popular drama had arisen which found far more favour with the general public. This was melodrama, which had its home at the theatres of L'Ambigu, La Gaieté, and La Porte St. Martin. When the Revolution had come and gone, the populace, hitherto content with the primitive and mainly comic entertainments provided by the *théâtres de la foire*, was ready and eager for the dramatic representation of nobler emotions, and Guilbert de Pixérécourt, the king of melodrama, or the "Corneille des boulevards," as he has been called, was there to supply the demand. Pixérécourt (1773-1844) was far from being the only purveyor of this popular drama, which flourished exceedingly between 1800 and 1840, but he was the best and most prolific of them. Of the hundred and twenty plays he is said to have produced, he selected twenty-four for publication under the title *Théâtre Choisi* (1843), with a preface by his friend, Charles Nodier. Of these the most popular were *Victor, ou l'enfant de la forêt* (1797), *Cælina, ou l'enfant du mystère* (1801), *Christophe Colomb* (1815). Pixérécourt sought his subjects in French and European history and fiction, borrowing his plots freely from Schiller, Goethe, and Kotzebue, and from English plays and novels. True to their type, these three-act melodramas are sensational in plot and situation, and extremely spectacular. Each of them contains four main characters—a villain or traitor of the deepest dye; an unfortunate and innocent heroine, who is a model of all the virtues; a single-minded hero, who always turns up in the nick of time to protect or save her; and a simpleton,

generally a soldier or a peasant, who provides the comic relief—for the mingling of tragedy and comedy is an essential feature of these plays. The conflict, such as it is, is invariably between unmitigated vice and irreproachable virtue. Virtue triumphs in the end—the hero and heroine are married, and the villain dies. The plays are written in grandiloquent prose, and are strewn with virtuous and moral reflections of an extraordinary platitude. Of character-drawing there is not a trace, and all gradations of light and shade are abolished. In Pixérécourt's melodramas, music, which had originally formed a running accompaniment to the action of this type of play,<sup>1</sup> still plays an important part, being used to emphasize strong situations and to bring on and off the stage the more important characters. How much the Romantics owed to melodrama we shall see in studying the dramatic work of Hugo and the elder Dumas.

The dramatic theories of the Romantics were mainly dictated by opposition to the French classical tradition and by admiration for the freer stage of Germany, England, and Spain. They find their fullest expression in Victor Hugo's *Préface de Cromwell* (1827). Certain details were further elaborated by Hugo in the prefaces to his subsequent plays, and by Alfred de Vigny and Dumas in similar *avant-propos* to their respective dramas. The main ideas developed by Hugo in this manifesto and elsewhere may be briefly summarized as follows:—

The function of drama is to give, not a one-sided and mutilated picture of life, but “tout regardé à la fois sous toutes ses faces.” In his later prefaces Hugo insists that the object of this “résurrection de la vie intégrale” is to give “à la foule une philosophie, aux idées une formule . . . à ceux qui pensent une explication désintéressée.” Hence “le théâtre est une tribune, le théâtre est une chaire.” In real life, beauty and ugliness, the sublime and the grotesque, are found side by

Leading ideas  
of the *Préface*  
de *Cromwell*

<sup>1</sup> In Italian the word *melodramma* is still used to denote a kind of musical drama.

side, and since "la poésie complète est dans l'harmonie des contrastes," the old arbitrary distinction between tragedy and comedy must go and the two dramatic forms be blended in a new type of drama with a framework sufficiently comprehensive to include the essential characteristics of both. If the dramatis personæ are to be true to life, they must be individual and complex characters placed in their correct historical setting, and must wear the costumes, speak the language, and behave according to the customs of their age and clime. Local colour is essential: "le drame doit être imprégné de la couleur des temps; elle doit à quelque sorte y être en l'air." Again, the broad and varied painting of life which the drama should give is incompatible with an observance of the unities of time and place. To observe them, "c'est mutiler hommes et choses; c'est faire grimacer l'histoire." Unity of action, however—which Victor Hugo would not have us confound with simplicity of action—is to be maintained. Otherwise, within the limits of his own artistic conscience, the dramatist is free as air to do as he pleases, though he will be wise always to choose the characteristic, be it sublime, beautiful, ugly, or grotesque—for in so doing, whether prose or verse be his medium, he will write "comme un homme qu'une fée aurait doué de l'âme de Corneille et de la tête de Molière."

It has been very justly remarked that in the *Préface de Cromwell* "what is new is not true, and what is true is not new." Hugo's theory of three stages of poetry, lyric, epic, and dramatic, corresponding to three ages of the world, primitive times, antiquity, and modern days, and represented by the Bible, Homer, and Shakespeare, is a neat but purely fantastic one, while his belief that modern poetry is distinguished from ancient by its use of grotesque and farcical elements has no foundation in fact. On the other hand, he was by no means the first to attack the Unities and to say in effect, "C'est avec les ciseaux des Unités qu'on a coupé l'aile de nos plus grands poètes," for Madame de Staël, Schlegel, Stendhal (*Racine et Shakespeare*, 1822), and Manzoni (*Lettre sur les Unités*,

Importance of  
the *Préface*  
de *Cromwell*



translated by Fauriel in 1823), had been before him in that field. As for his recommendations on the subject of local colour and the fusing of tragedy and comedy, he merely elaborates what had been said by some of the same theorists and actually put into practice by Lemercier, Pixérécourt, and others.

Nevertheless, the historical importance of the *Préface* is very great, for in it Victor Hugo, at the psychological moment, developed and combined scattered ideas which were already in the air with such emphasis and with such a wealth of rhetoric and imagery that, as Théophile Gautier picturesquely phrases it, the *Préface de Cromwell* "rayonnait . . . comme les tables de la loi sur le Sinaï et ses arguments semblaient sans réplique."

How far the Romantics were successful in the application of their dramatic theories may best be seen by a study of their respective plays.

The play to which Hugo's famous manifesto formed a Préface, *Cromwell* (1827) was, with its five acts, seventy-five scenes—most of them very long—and sixty speaking characters, quite unactable, nor indeed was it intended for the stage. Its plot turns on the Protector's ambition for kingship, and the play was written to illustrate the preface not the preface to explain the play. Despite its youthful crudity—Victor Hugo was only twenty-three when he wrote it—*Cromwell* is perhaps the fullest and most logical application that he ever made of his dramatic doctrine. In it he endeavours to represent a whole epoch, to make a complex character, with all its contradictions, the pivot of the action, and to use a modern natural style, even though he writes in verse. In this last he was successful—but his other two ambitions wreck the play; for the dramatist must concentrate and simplify, otherwise he should give up drama for the novel. Victor Hugo never made this mistake to the same extent again, though he made many others. In various ways his subsequent plays—in verse, *Hernani* (1830), *Marion Delorme* (1831), *Le Roi s'amuse* (1832), *Ruy Blas*

### III. THE ROMANTIC DRAMATISTS Victor Hugo

(1835), *Les Burgraves* (1843) ; in prose, *Lucrèce Borgia* (1833), *Marie Tudor* (1833), *Angelo* (1835)—are far from being a perfect illustration of the precepts laid down in the *Préface de Cromwell*. That they are true to life is the very last thing that can be said of them. Situations and characters alike are not only exceptional, startling, and improbable, but they are magnified and distorted out of any resemblance with reality. Further, the characterization is of the most rudimentary kind. Each of Hugo's heroes and heroines is a living embodiment of two contradictory tendencies, sublime or beautiful, ugly or grotesque, brought into sharp contrast without any half-lights or gradations. Hugo constantly underlines this antithesis in his characters ; and a spark of virtue or nobility is struck from the soul of the most hardened sinners. With them it is always a case of "la boue, mais l'âme." Under the garb of a bandit beats the heart of a noble-minded hero—Hernani ; a thoroughly corrupt woman is ennobled by her love for a pure-minded man—Marion Delorme ; a murderess is sanctified by her intense maternal love—Lucrèce Borgia ; a hideous and deformed monster is transfigured by devotion to his son—Triboulet (in *Le Roi s'amuse*), etc. The tirades he so fiercely denounces in the *Préface* appear in almost every scene of his own plays, and indeed it is to these lyrical and epic outbursts that they owe most of their power and beauty. This is so much the case that Sarcey once wrote :

"Tout l'art de Hugo consiste à mettre violemment ses personnages dans une position où ils puissent aisément s'épancher en odes, en pièces de vers."

Even the "local colour," on which Hugo so much prided himself, and which in his case depends entirely on scenery and on the suggestive quality of his own verse, is a somewhat superficial thing, for he is quite incapable of creating historical atmosphere, and his interpretation of history was, as a rule, unsound. Thus Hugo's plays contain neither enough human nor enough historical truth to please a cultured taste, and they depend for their interest entirely

on their thrills and surprises and on the glamour of their style. In other words, they are the melodramas of a man of genius. The characters to a certain extent approximate to the conventional types of melodrama; the plots are melodramatic in the extreme, and rely on all the stage properties of melodrama, trap-doors, secret staircases, subterranean passages, sliding panels, etc. Some important differences there are undoubtedly. In Hugo's plays virtue is not invariably rewarded; his villains are not common melodramatic villains, but embodiments of evil, of fate, of Satan; and his heroes are of Byronic mould, gloomy, mysterious creatures, who might all say with *Hernani*:

"Tu me crois peut-être

Un homme comme sont tous les autres, un être

Intelligent, qui court droit au but qu'il rêva.

Détrompe toi. Je suis une force qui va!

Agent aveugle et sourd de mystères funèbres!

Une âme de malheur fait avec des ténèbres!

Où vais-je? Je ne sais. Mais je me sens poussé,

D'un souffle impétueux, d'un destin insensé."

Act III, Sc. 4.

Lastly, Hugo's plays differ from melodrama in that they all aim at proving some social or political thesis, and thus have that philosophical intention with which their author somewhat wearies us in his prefaces. Hugo's finest dramatic creations are *Hernani* and *Ruy Blas*, and this mainly by reason of the splendour and imaginative quality of their verse; but even when stripped of this ornament (*Lucrèce Borgia*, *Marie Tudor*), his drama is redeemed by its vigour and its emotional intensity. M. Glachant, quoting Jules Janin's judgment of *Angelo*, the worst of Hugo's prose dramas: "C'est du Shakespeare, dit la louange—C'est du Pixérécourt, dit la critique," continues: "C'est du Victor Hugo, reprend la vraie et sage critique."<sup>1</sup>

Hugo's last two plays, *Les Burgraves* and *Torquemada*, are epics in dramatic form. *Les Burgraves*, which was hissed

<sup>1</sup> *Essai critique sur le théâtre de Victor Hugo. Les Drames en prose*, p. 8 (Hachette, 1903).

off the stage in 1843, is a splendid gallery of epic heroes—four generations of Burgraves (the youngest but one ninety years of age), all living at the same time, and joined by Barbarossa, awakened from his magic sleep—too vast and improbable a subject for a play, but magnificent if regarded as a prelude to *La Légende des Siècles*.

Victor Hugo attempted the impossible feat of making drama a synthesis of all forms of literary art, epic, lyric, and dramatic, and such an attempt was, by reason of its very vastness and incongruity, doomed to failure.

To Alexandre Dumas (1803-1870) belongs the honour of having written the first romantic drama to be performed—*Henri III et sa cour* (1829). This first success was immediately followed by numerous other historical plays, of which the most important are *Christine de Suède*, written before *Henri III*, but not performed till 1830; *Charles VII et ses grands vassaux* (1831); and *La Tour de Nesle* (1832); a prose melodrama, *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* (1839), etc. Interspersed with these historical plays of the romantic kind came others on contemporary subjects, *Antony* (1831), *Richard Darlington* (1831), *Kean* (1836), in which the heroes are all individualists of the gloomy romantic type, misunderstood and hampered by their circumstances, and hence in revolt against society and its moral code.

Dumas' plays have the same melodramatic characteristics as Hugo's, and they are equally weak in psychological analysis. On the other hand, though they have none of the literary qualities which mask the shortcomings of Hugo's dramas, they reveal an instinct for the stage which Hugo was far from possessing. Dumas' boast that all he required for success was "four boards, two actors, and a passion," was not an empty one, and he admirably practised his conception of the whole art of the dramatist, which consisted in making "the first act clear, the last act short, and all the acts interesting." Hence, while Hugo's dramas give greater pleasure to the reader than to the play-goer, the plays of Dumas are not worth reading, but, in spite of their faults,

Alexandre  
Dumas the  
Elder  
(1803-1870)



they make good stage-plays, by reason of their skilful technique, their movement, and their vitality.

Psychological insight, conspicuous by its absence in the dramatic work of Hugo and Dumas, is, as might be expected from what we know of his poetry, an essential characteristic of the plays of Vigny, who began his dramatic career with two verse adaptations of Shakespeare : *Shylock* (1828), which was never acted, and *Othello* (1829), the first performance of which was hailed with acclamation, and did much to assure the romantic triumph on the stage. Vigny's original contribution to the drama consists of three plays only—a one-act comedy, *Quitte pour la peur* (1833), and two tragedies in prose, *La Maréchale d'Ancre* (1831), which dramatizes a historical episode of the minority of Louis XIII, and is designed to illustrate the power of destiny, and *Chatterton* (1835), a philosophical drama in three acts on his favourite theme : the tragedy of genius in a materialistic society.

*Chatterton* may be regarded as the most original of all the romantic dramas—though it is more interesting as an analytical study than as a play. The conflict is an entirely psychological one, and is not dependent on outward incident. "*Chatterton*," says Vigny himself, "est l'histoire d'un homme qui a écrit une lettre le matin et qui attend la réponse jusqu'au soir : elle arrive et le tue." This simplicity of plot is unusual in romantic drama, and so is the absence of sensational incidents. On the other hand, *Chatterton*, the proud Romantic egoist, the "être à part," with his eloquent monologues on the poet's mission—his own personal misfortunes—is true to type, and the bourgeois counterpart of many another romantic hero.

The plays of Alfred de Musset are quite the best produced by the Romantic school. Musset's ideas naturally took a dramatic form, as may be seen in *Les Marrons du feu*, *Le Spectacle dans un fauteuil*, *La Coupe et les Lèvres*, and *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles*, all contained in the *Premières Poésies*. The performance of his one-act *Nuit Vénitienne* (1831) was so little of a success that



Musset forswore writing for the stage, and though he continued to write plays, he did so without a thought of their representation, and hence was free to eliminate all theatrical conventions. Since he had a strong dramatic instinct his plays gained rather than lost by this freedom. Most of his pieces appeared in the *Revue des deux Mondes* between 1833 and 1837, and were published in book form in 1840 with the title *Comédies et Proverbes* (*Proverbes*, because many of them, like *On ne badine pas avec l'Amour*, *Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée*, *Il ne faut jurer de rien*, etc., exemplify familiar proverbial sayings). The collection passed almost unnoticed, and the sudden popularity some years later of the plays which composed it has a curious history. In 1847 a French actress, Madame Allan-Despréaux, during a visit to St. Petersburg was taken to see a little Russian play which was drawing large audiences. Charmed with the piece, she wished to have it translated into French, and then discovered that it was Musset's *Un Caprice*. On her return to France she produced the play in Paris with such success that the performance of Musset's other *Comédies et Proverbes* soon followed. This unexpected success induced Musset to write three more comedies: *On ne saurait penser à tout* (1849), *Carmosine* (1850), and *Bettine* (1851).

All these plays are written in Musset's inimitable prose, and they are all in three acts, except *Lorenzaccio*, which is in five. This play and another, *André del Sarto*, differ from the rest by their historical subjects and setting, but fine as they are, they scarcely equal the little love-comedies among which it is difficult to choose, so delightful are they all. But if a selection must be made, *Fantasio*, *Les Caprices de Marianne*, and *Barberine* should be added to the *Proverbes* above-mentioned.

Musset's plays, as M. Strowski has pointed out, have the Shakespearean gift of transporting us into an unreal world which is at once richer, truer, and more beautiful than the real world. They are of the very essence of romance, though they are entirely divested of all the usual romantic accessories. Whether the scene be nominally

laid in Italy, Bavaria, Hungary, the country-side in France or nowhere in particular, the characters live and move in an atmosphere of poetry and romance, where it is always spring and always afternoon. But the characters themselves are real enough, and the various phases of feeling through which they pass are exquisitely noted, for Musset, who had the power of seeing himself, objectively gives them his own emotional experiences. Love is the mainspring of each and every plot—from light love through all the intervening stages to an ideal love, which is less intense than the tragic passion of Racine but far profounder than the elegant gallantry of Marivaux. As for the dialogue, turn by turn witty, dreamy or passionate, always captivating, it has in an eminent degree the poetical quality of suggesting more than it expresses. By this wonderful blending of fancy and reality, wit and pathos, and by the magic of their style, Musset's plays, slight as they are, are little masterpieces which have never been equalled in their kind.

Romanticism, with its individualism, its lyric tendency, its preoccupation with the picturesque aspect of history, and its desire to give "une peinture large de la vie" (in which "large" may be taken as synonymous with vast) was by the very nature of its programme doomed to fail on the stage for the very reasons that made it successful in poetry and the novel, and in history as a "resurrection of the past." And, indeed, romantic drama was but a flash in the pan, and died with the generation which had given it birth, and whose tastes it represented.

In 1843, the year that *Les Burgraves* was hissed off the stage and Victor Hugo abandoned the drama in consequence, François Ponsard (1814-1867) won a great triumph at the Odéon with a classical tragedy, *Lucrèce*. This play, which was far from being a masterpiece, owed much of its success to the great tragic actress, Rachel, who since 1838 had been reviving the tragedies of Corneille and Racine at the Comédie Française, and thus inaugurated a reaction in favour of classical drama.

Nevertheless, neither Ponsard nor anyone else repeated the success of *Lucrèce*, though ever since the time of Rachel the plays of Corneille and Racine have had a place in the repertory of the Comédie Française and of the Odéon. It was too late to write new tragedies in the classical form, after the Romantic school had swept away all dramatic rules and conventions. But if classical tragedy was dead beyond resurrection, romantic drama with its exaggerations and eccentricities was in its death-throes, and, as we shall see later, was succeeded by a form of drama at once lighter and more serious which aimed either at giving a realistic picture of manners or at dramatizing some social problem.

## CHAPTER VI

### PROSE FICTION DURING THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

#### THE NOVEL AND THE SHORT STORY

**T**HE Romantic spirit made its first definite entrance into literature through the novels of J.-J. Rousseau, Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant, and Senancour. *La Nouvelle Héloïse*,

**I. THE NOVEL** *Delphine* and *Corinne*, *Atala* and *René*, *Oberman* and *Adolphe* belong to romantic literature by their semi-autobiographical character, by their intense individualism, and by the violence and gloom of the passions they depict. After 1825 this youngest and least rule-ridden literary form became, as it has since remained, the most popular and the most widely cultivated of all literary kinds, and either continued to be a medium for the expression of private and personal emotion and for psychological analysis, or transformed itself into a vehicle for a picturesque revival of the historical past, for the representation of actual or ideal conditions, and for the embodiment of social or political theories.

All the great Romantics were first and foremost lyrical poets, but they also prided themselves on being novelists, and from the artistic point of view their novels are as superior to their plays as they are inferior to their best lyrical poetry. The novels of the Romantic period may be roughly divided into three kinds: the novel of sentiment, the historical romance, and the novel of contemporary manners, which in the hands of Balzac approaches closely to pure realism.

The sentimental and analytical novel was not the creation of the Romantic school. It had its far-off and primitive beginnings in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes and in the Cante-fable *Aucassin et Nicolette*; in the seventeenth century it is represented by the long-winded affected novels of Scudéry and La Calprenède, and by the short and simple *Princesse de Clèves*; in the eighteenth century, after *Manon Lescaut*, it finds its best example in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the first link in the chain which connects *Atala*, *René*, *Delphine*, *Corinne*, and *Adolphe*. The Romantics proper very naturally continued to write this kind of novel, which gives ample scope for the display of individuality. Autobiographical, sentimental and lyrical in the hands of Lamartine—*Raphaël* (1849), *Graziella* (1852), and *Jocelyn* (1836), which though in verse is in all essentials a novel; autobiographical, sentimental, and analytical in the hands of Sainte-Beuve, *Volupté* (1834); of Vigny, *Stello* (1832), and of Musset, *La Confession d'un Enfant du siècle* (1836), the novel of ideal personal sentiment reaches its high-water mark during the Romantic period in the work of Stendhal, and in the early romances of George Sand.

Lucile-Aurore Dupin, who later took the pen-name of George Sand, the daughter of an aristocratic father and a plebeian mother, was born in Paris, but passed her early childhood with her grandmother at Nohant in Berry. In this lovely region she spent her days roaming the country-side with little peasants of her own age, and acquiring that love of nature which inspired much of her later work. At thirteen she was sent to be educated at a convent in Paris, where after a period of two years of naughtiness she became intensely religious. When in 1820 she was called to the sick-bed of her grandmother, the resumption of a country life cooled her religious exaltation, and she began to read enthusiastically all the poets, moralists, philosophers, and historians she could lay hands on. In 1822, shortly after the death of her grandmother, she married the Baron Dude-



vant, a man of vulgar tastes and no intellectual interests. She separated from him in 1830, and came to Paris with her two children to earn a livelihood by her pen. Her first novel, *Rose et Blanche* (1831), was written in collaboration with Jules Sandeau, from whom she took the pseudonym, under which all her subsequent novels appeared. After a journey to Italy in the company of Musset, George Sand settled at Nohant, which she left only occasionally when on travel bent. Here she wrote nearly all her books, and was known in the neighbourhood as "la bonne dame de Nohant."

Besides her autobiographical works (*Souvenirs, Histoire de ma vie, Elle et Lui*), descriptions of travel in Italy (*Lettres d'un voyageur*), plays, and her vast *Correspondence* (six vols.), she wrote about a hundred novels and tales, in which she achieved her avowed aim as an artist, "idéalisation du sentiment . . . dans un cadre de réalité." These novels fall into four main groups, which correspond roughly to four periods in her mental outlook. The novels of the two middle periods, 1837-1852, are novels of manners, and will be dealt with in their proper place, while those she wrote at the beginning and end of her career are romantic love-novels.

At first a disciple of Rousseau and Chateaubriand, and still obsessed by the unhappiness of her own married life, George Sand wrote *Indiana* (1831), *Valentine* (1832), *Lélia* (1833), *Jacques* (1834), and *Mauprat* (1837), under the dictation of her personal experiences, and gave unrestrained expression to her feelings of revolt against loveless marriage, male tyranny, and the subjugation of women. All these novels contain a plea for the rights of individuality, more especially from the feminist point of view, and a condemnation of society, which hampers its free development. After this frenzied outburst of individualism she used the novel as a vehicle for socialist and humanitarian ideals, and for painting charming idylls of peasant life, and finally in her later years she returned to the novel of pure sentiment, of

Her romantic  
love-novels

which the best examples are *Jean de la Roche* (1860), and *Le Marquis de Villemer* (1861). Both are penetrating studies of the psychology of the young girl who is no longer a child and not yet a woman. They are full of fine nature descriptions, and are much less violent and exalted in tone than the early novels.

Stendhal (1783-1842), whose real name was Henri Beyle, was born at Grenoble, and served under Napoleon until the end of the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812. He idolized Napoleon as the incarnation of that force and energy of which in his own novels he is the apostle—and the very idea of the Restoration was hateful to him. Italy was the home of his choice, partly because he had an intense admiration for the violent and passionate temperament of its inhabitants. He lived in Milan from 1814 to 1821, was successively consul of Trieste and of Civitavecchia from 1830 to 1841, and died in Paris in 1842.

Stendhal began his literary career when he was a little over thirty by writing on music and musical composers, *Vie de Haydn, Mozart et Métafise* (1814-1817); on painting, *Histoire de la peinture en Italie* (1817); on the beauties of Italy, *Rome, Naples, Florence* (1817), and on psychology, *Essai sur l'Amour* (1822).

From 1823 to 1825 he contributed to Romantic propaganda by his *Racine et Shakespeare*, which appeared in two parts, and which develops the paradoxical idea that the great classical writers of France were romantic in their own time because their writings were in harmony with the spirit of the age in which they wrote, while the pseudo-classical writers of a later date had merely perpetuated a then dead and meaningless tradition, against which modern Romanticism must react at all costs.

The most famous of Stendhal's novels, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *Chronique de 1830* (1831), is the story of a proud, ambitious, and cynical young man, Julien Sorel, who, finding that the red coat of the soldier which led to glory under the Empire is no passport to fame under the Restoration, dons

the black coat of a priest for his ambitious purposes, and ends his life on the scaffold for attempted murder. *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839), which opens with a wonderful description of the hero's experiences on the field of Waterloo, is mainly occupied with the characters and intrigues of a small Italian court in 1815. Both these novels reveal many romantic traits: their plots are melodramatic, and their heroes, Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo, exceptional men placed in exceptional circumstances, are examples of the *beau ténébreux*, though not quite typical examples, for though they have their dreams, are fully conscious of their superiority to other men, and out of tune with their surroundings, they are not mere ineffectual dreamers, but men of energy and action. Yet despite the fact that the subject-matter and the heroes of Stendhal's novels are highly romantic, the psychology of the characters is so delicately analysed, and the style so impersonal and simple that what might otherwise have been ordinary novels of sentiment become forerunners of the modern novel of psychological analysis. The most secret motives of action are laid bare with an unerring hand, and the story proceeds without any of the discursiveness or lyricism which too often characterize the novels of Stendhal's contemporaries. The style in which they are written is simple, condensed, and unadorned to the point of dryness, and we can well believe their author when he writes: "En composant *la Chartreuse*, pour prendre le ton, je lisais chaque matin deux ou trois pages du code civil, afin d'être toujours naturel." Stendhal's novels found little favour with his contemporaries, though Mérimée fully appreciated them, and prophesied that twentieth-century critics would do the same. This prophecy and Stendhal's own, "Je serai compris vers 1880," have been amply fulfilled. It was in 1882 that Bourget's *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* first brought him real celebrity, and gave him a secure place in the history of the French novel, and the interest and admiration which have since been lavished on the man and his work have given rise to the word *Stendhalisme* or *Beylisme*.

The Romantics were the creators of the historical novel in France, being naturally led thereto by their interest in national history and by their sense of the picturesqueness of the past. The germ of the historical romance is already to be found in Chateaubriand's *Martyrs*, but the real impetus was given by Scott's *Waverley Novels*.

French criticism began to deal with Scott's early novels in 1816; between 1819 and 1823 Victor Hugo wrote various eulogistic articles on them in *Le Conservateur Littéraire* and *La Muse française*, and in 1822 Defauconpret translated them into French. When Walter Scott died in 1832 Sainte-Beuve wrote in *Le Globe*:

"Ce n'est pas seulement un deuil pour l'Angleterre, c'en doit être un pour la France et pour le monde civilisé, dont Walter Scott, plus qu'aucun autre des écrivains du temps, a été comme l'enchanteur prodigue et l'aimable bienfaiteur."

Between 1820 and 1830 and even beyond that date, the vogue of Scott's novels in France passed all bounds. It was natural for any Frenchman trying his hand at historical fiction to imitate them, and it is not too much to say that all the best and worst historical novels of the Romantic school were inspired by the great Scottish novelist.

The first important example of this new kind of fiction was Alfred de Vigny's *Cinq Mars ou une Conjuration sous Louis XIII* (1826), the story of the struggle between the ambitious young nobleman Cinq-Mars seeking place and power in order to win the hand of Marie de Gonzague, and the all-powerful Richelieu, who neither forgives nor forgets. Though Vigny had made long preparatory studies before writing it, *Cinq-Mars*, despite its accurate and vivid setting, is not a good historical novel, for its value as such is vitiated from the outset by its author's theory that the novelist has the right to modify historical facts in the direction of popular tradition,<sup>1</sup> and by the fact

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Réflexions sur la vérité dans l'art*, prefixed to the 1827 edition of *Cinq-Mars*.



that his treatment of an historical episode reflects his own political sympathies and antipathies. As the latter were those of a royalist and an aristocrat born and bred, his Richelieu is a grotesque distortion of the historical Richelieu, while his Cinq-Mars is idealized out of all resemblance with the far from admirable conspirator of history. This partisan treatment of great historical personages is serious in Vigny's case, because he makes them the most prominent characters in the story. It also differentiates him from Scott, in whose footsteps he wished to tread, for Scott always regarded such historical figures with the impartial eye of the true artist, and rarely gave them a place in the foreground of his novels. A reader entirely ignorant of French history reading *Cinq-Mars* as a work of pure fiction in an historical setting will read it from cover to cover with delight, carried along by its dramatic incidents, its vivid pictures of the France of Louis XIII, and its admirable style.

Three years after *Cinq-Mars* appeared Prosper Mérimée's *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* (1829), an excellent historical novel with a fictitious plot, as little picturesque description as there is much in *Cinq-Mars*, and with infinitely more suggestion of the atmosphere and way of life and thought of a definite historical period.

It had been preceded by a few months by Balzac's *Les Chouans, ou la Bretagne en 1799* (1829), in which external and what may be termed "psychological" local colour are in perfect equilibrium. Nevertheless, this novel was less appreciated in its own day than either *Cinq-Mars* or *Charles IX*, probably because the subject with which it deals was almost contemporary history, and readers of the Romantic period preferred to have their emotions stirred by tales of a remoter past.

In 1831 appeared an historical novel from the pen of Victor Hugo, which had a greater and more lasting success than any of its predecessors and put them all into the shade. This was *Notre-Dame de Paris*, which had the double advantage of a ficti-



tious plot, and of carrying the reader back to the late Middle Ages. *Notre-Dame de Paris* was not Hugo's first novel—it had been preceded by two wildly extravagant tales of adventure, the legendary *Han d'Islande* (1823), with a gruesome hero who feeds on human flesh and drinks a mixture of blood and sea-water from the skulls of his victims, and the semi-historical *Bug-Jargal* (1826), the scene of which is laid in San Domingo during the slave revolt of 1791, and which glorifies a hero whose soul is as white as his skin is black. It had also been preceded by *Le Dernier jour d'un Condamné* (1829), which describes the thoughts and feelings of an enlightened criminal during the last twenty-four hours of his life, and was the first of Victor Hugo's reiterated pleas for the abolition of capital punishment. These first essays in fiction pale before *Notre-Dame de Paris*, that masterly reconstruction of the outward life of the Paris of Louis XI in all its aspects. The story itself is crude and melodramatic: the foundling gipsy-girl, Esmeralda, strays with her goat through the high and low places of medieval Paris, and is loved by four men, who are chosen to represent different strata of the society of the day: Pierre Gringoire, the poet; Jehan Frollo, a priest and a villain, whose love turns to hate when he finds that it is not returned; Quasimodo, the hunchback bellringer of Notre Dame and a man of the people who protects Esmeralda in all her misfortunes; and Captain Phœbus de Châteaupers, a fatuous young sprig of the nobility, whom Esmeralda loves to the exclusion of all the others. She, Quasimodo, and Frollo all come to a tragic end, and Phœbus marries another.

Though by their names, their costume, their language, and their manners these characters belong to the fifteenth century, their ideas and feelings are quite modern, and their psychology is crude at that. The human beings in the novel are as it were absorbed into the wonderful colour and relief of their setting, and we read the book for the magnificence of its descriptions (*Notre Dame*, III, i; *Paris à vol d'Oiseau*, III, ii; *Les Cloches*, VII, iii), and for its masterly handling of medieval crowds (*La grand'salle du Palais de Justice*, I, i;

*La Place de Grève*, II, ii). The real heroine is not Esmeralda, but the great Gothic cathedral within whose precincts and shadow so many of the incidents take place, and whose architecture, atmosphere, history, and spirit are rendered with consummate skill, and lead to endless digressions, one of the most famous being embodied in the chapter "Ceci tuera cela," a brilliant essay on the fatal effect of the printed book on architecture.

Nearly thirty years elapsed between *Notre Dame* and the appearance of Hugo's next novel, *Les Misérables*, *Les Misérables* (1862) which owed its inspiration to the same democratic and humanitarian ideas which underlie so much of George Sand's work. The hero, Jean Valjean, is an ex-convict, regenerated through the magnanimity of Bishop Myriel. When later by honest effort he has become a rich manufacturer, he allows himself to be given up to justice to shield an innocent person. He then disappears, but is hunted down by the police agent, Javert, whose life he saves. In gratitude for this Javert allows him to escape once more, and himself commits suicide because he has failed in his duty. When Jean Valjean dies he has assured the future happiness of his adopted daughter, Cosette, by marrying her to her lover, Marius. This in barest outline is the main plot of *Les Misérables*, yet the most compact edition runs to 1,970 closely-printed pages, a full quarter of that number being taken up with extraneous episodes, digressions, and meditations.

The psychology of Jean Valjean, which is an excellent example of Hugo's love of antithesis, has been admirably summed up by Madame Duclaux: "Jean Valjean wears as it were two pouches: in one he has the experiences of a convict, in the other the instincts of a saint; and his thoughts and deeds as he goes through life are extracted sometimes from the one and sometimes from the other."

Philosophical and symbolical, historical in parts (Waterloo, Paris in 1832, *Les Barricades*), now adventurous, now idyllic, now sordidly realistic, this vast novel is a curious medley of good and indifferent things, which are, "with the

rarest exception, the stuff of drama and poetry but not of the novel." <sup>1</sup>

After *Les Misérables* came *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (1866), a fantastic romance of adventure symbolizing the struggle of man with the forces of nature, and regarded by many as his finest piece of fiction; and two more historical novels—*L'Homme qui rit* (1869), an absurd caricature of English life and manners under the Stuarts, followed in 1872 by *Quatre-Vingt-Treize*, an episode of the Revolution in La Vendée, which, in spite of Hugo's habitual haranguing and digressing, shows him at his very best as a novelist, and is one of the finest historical novels ever written in French. These later novels, like all their author's work, carry us far beyond the period we are studying, but they must be mentioned here, because to the end they retained typically Romantic qualities.

Thirteen years after the appearance of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Alexandre Dumas the Elder (1803-1870) began the long series of his *romans de cape et d'épée*, with *Les trois Mousquetaires* (1844, 8 vols).

The complete edition of Dumas' novels runs to some 250 volumes, and their subjects are taken from all periods of French history from the Middle Ages to his own day, but as Professor Saintsbury points out, the best and most justly famous of them are those which "come after Saint-Bartholomew and before Sainte-Guillotine." Dumas' fame as a novelist rests mainly on the D'Artagnan trilogy—*Les Trois Mousquetaires*, *Vingt ans après* (1845), and *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* (1847); the Valois trilogy—*Marguerite de Valois*, *La Dame de Monsoreau*, and *Les Quarante-Cinq*, and a few independent novels like *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1884-1845) and *Le Tulipe Noir*. Even though it has been proved that he had numerous collaborators so that the term "Dumas et C<sup>ie</sup>" was no mere slanderous gibe, his output was enormous, and his inventiveness extraordinary. From this point of

<sup>1</sup> Saintsbury: *History of the French Novel*, Vol. II (1919).

view Michelet's remark, "Monsieur je vous admire et je vous aime, vous êtes une des forces de la nature," was amply justified. Most French literary historians either disregard Dumas' novels altogether, or dismiss them with a few contemptuous remarks as being unworthy of the name of literature. It is true that he was neither a stylist nor a psychologist, that he had little historical imagination, and that, as he himself puts it, he only used history as a nail on which to hang his pictures. Yet a better story-teller never existed. From the first page to the last he knows how to arouse and hold his readers' interests, and to carry them along in the spirit of high adventure. His dialogue is lively and dramatic, and like Scott, he introduces it as no mere *hors d'œuvre*, but as a means of carrying forward the story.

Dumas' novels have been well defined as "romanticized history rather than historical romance." A careful blending of the best qualities of Hugo and Dumas would have produced a French Scott, but no such person was forthcoming. The romance of adventure, in meaner hands than those of the "Alexander the Great of Fiction," degenerated into the popular and unliterary feuilleton novel, while the historical romance proper died of a surfeit of local colour and picturesque description, not however before it had prepared the way for the triumph of the realistic novel and of history, which was by the very nature of things its fiercest and most uncompromising enemy, for to all but the most youthful readers well-told history is more satisfying than the best historical romance. "Qu'est ce qu'un roman d'histoire?" inquires Brunetière, "quelque chose . . . qui sera de l'histoire si vous y cherchez le roman, mais qui demeurera du roman si vous y cherchez de l'histoire."

There are two kinds of historical novel—the kind we have just been studying, which consists in a resuscitation of past life and manners based on a study of historical documents, and the novel which gives a picture of contemporary manners, and which acquires historical and documentary value with the passage of time. In the one case past history is the source-book for



the novel ; in the other the novel is a source-book for future social historians. The transition from the historical romance to the novel of contemporary manners was thus an easy one. Novelists had but to transfer their search of local colour and picturesque detail from the past to the present and to realize that since the historical novel depended for its success on reviving what was life-like in the past, so the representation of what to-day is life-like will have enduring value in the future. Thus the historical novel of the early nineteenth century prepared the way for the novel of contemporary manners, and since, by its very nature, the historical novel demanded objective treatment, it took writers out of themselves, and thus helped to pave the way for realism.

The two chief representatives of the novel of manners during the Romantic period were a man and a woman who regarded life from almost diametrically opposed standpoints, and who differed accordingly in their interpretation of their time.

They were George Sand and Balzac.

George Sand, an idealist and an optimist, chose for her main province the life and manners of peasants and of artisans in the country districts of Berry, Auvergne, Normandy, and Provence, and endowed them with the lofty humanitarian aspirations, over which many of her contemporaries were waxing enthusiastic. The subjective element is present even in her socialistic novels, for she estimates the value of things and ideas only in proportion to the interest they arouse in her, and therefore her novels are apt to express the aspirations rather than the realities of her age.

Far otherwise is it with Balzac. He was perhaps no better satisfied with existing conditions than was George Sand, but he accepted men and things as he found them and treated them objectively and impersonally. The task he set himself was to give a vast picture of the life and manners of his age in all classes of society both in town and country, and as he was a pessimist, and the reverse of an idealist, it was the darker and seamier side of contemporary life which he saw most clearly and described most forcibly.

George Sand  
and Balzac as  
interpreters of  
their time



George Sand recounts a conversation she once had with Balzac, which admirably sums up these respective attitudes :

“ Vous faites la *Comédie humaine*. Ce titre est modeste ; vous pourriez aussi bien dire le drame, la *tragédie humaine*. Qui, me répondit-il, et vous, vous faites *l'épopée humaine*. Cette fois, repris-je, le titre serait trop relevé. Mais je voudrais faire *l'églogue humaine*, le *poème*, le *roman humain*. En somme vous voulez et savez peindre l'homme tel qu'il est sous nos yeux, soit ! Moi, je me sens portée à le peindre tel que je souhaite qu'il soit, tel que je crois qu'il doit être.”—*Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (Notice).

Until the year 1830, George Sand had only left Nohant for a few brief visits to Paris and a journey to Italy, and her chief intellectual friend and counsellor had been Sainte-Beuve. After 1833, her society was sought after by certain members of the Saint-Simonian school, delighted to find in her early novels, *Indiana*, *Valentine*, and *Lélia*, an independent expression of their own ideas about the emancipation of women. In 1835 she made the acquaintance of four men—Michel de Bourges, Liszt, Lamennais, and Pierre Leroux, who were to have a great influence upon her attitude towards life, and hence upon her work.

George Sand's  
humanitarian  
novels  
(1839-1848)

The men who  
influenced her  
ideas during  
this period

It was Michel de Bourges, the eloquent counsel who secured her judicial separation from her husband, and a fiery demagogue to boot, who first interested George Sand in social and political questions, and inspired her with the democratic idealism which underlies all her later novels. The same year the great Hungarian composer, Liszt, who had for some years been an admirer of George Sand's powers as a novelist, secured an introduction to her through Alfred de Musset. Liszt had been in Paris since 1828, and took a great interest in all the literary, religious, and political aspirations of the day. The meeting between the musician and the novelist was the beginning of a serious friendship ; in temperament, conviction, and tastes they had much in common, and George Sand, though no performer, was passionately fond of music. Between 1835 and 1838 they saw a great deal

of each other, and in the summer of 1837 Liszt and Daniel Stern (Comtesse d'Agoult) spent several weeks at Nohant with George Sand. Every night the hostess and her guest sat up till the small hours of the morning, working, she at *Mauprat*, he at his pianoforte arrangement of Beethoven's symphonies.

Liszt's personality and his attitude towards life and art made a deep impression on George Sand. Since 1831 he had been in close touch with the Saint-Simonians, with whose conception of artists as the priests or spiritual directors of the society of the future he was in deep sympathy. Through her intercourse with him, George Sand, whose æsthetic sense had already been sharpened by Musset, became conscious of the sacredness of the artist's vocation, and of the need to treat all art in a spirit of high seriousness.

Among the characters of her later novels (*Consuelo*, *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, *Lucrezia Floriani*) figure many artists, mainly musicians, all filled with a sense of their mission and with the idea that *génie oblige*. It was also, thanks to Liszt as much as to Leroux, that she became more interested in Saint-Simonianism as a whole, and in 1836 and 1837 attended some of the Saint-Simonian séances. When he first met George Sand, Liszt was already a friend and disciple of Lamennais, the apostle of Christian socialism. He lost no time in making his two friends known to each other, and, through Lamennais, George Sand made the acquaintance of Pierre Leroux. Both these men were Saint-Simonians according to their respective lights, and both influenced George Sand, though the influence of Leroux was the stronger and the more enduring. In her *Lettres à Marcie* (1837) she is the mouthpiece of Lamennais' religious mysticism, while *Spiridion* (1839) contains both an expression of Leroux' mystical philosophy (and indeed the final version of the closing chapters was actually written by him) and a mental and moral portrait of Lamennais in the person of the hero, Père Alexis. In the development of George Sand's social and religious theories, Lamennais formed the necessary transition between the violent and hard-headed communist,

Michel de Bourges, in whose schemes art and poetry had no place, and the peaceable Utopist, Pierre Leroux.<sup>1</sup> And transitory the Lamennais-Sand friendship was doomed to be, for it came to an abrupt end owing to their diametrically opposed views on the questions of women's rights, a subject on which neither of them could compromise. With Leroux it was otherwise. She was first attracted by him because of his feminist views, and then accepted all his other theories wholesale—his advanced though vague socialism (it was he who coined the word); his humanitarianism, of which he was to give a full exposition in *De l'humanité, de son principe et de son avenir* (1870); his conviction that there is a spiritual element in all material things; and his theory of the transmigration of souls.

The novels which she produced between 1839 and 1848, *Les Sept Cordes de la Lyre* (1840), *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1841), *Horace* (1842), *Consuelo* (1842-1844), *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt* (1843-1845), *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (1845), *Le Pêché de M. Antoine* (1847), were nearly all written under the inspiration of his humanitarian, socialistic, and religious views. In the meantime another influence had come into George Sand's life—her friendship with the great musician Chopin, which brought her into contact with a sphere of ideas and feelings which only went to strengthen certain aspects of Leroux's teaching. Chopin, who had been living in Paris since 1831, was the son of a French emigrant in Poland who had become a naturalized Pole. George Sand first met him in 1836, and after wintering together in Majorca for the sake of his health (1838-1839), they settled down in Paris for a time in neighbouring apartments. In Chopin's salon she met all the leading emigrants from Poland then in Paris, including the three greatest modern poets of that unfortunate country, Mickiewicz, Krasinski, and Slowacki, and thus was initiated into the mystical and poetical attitude towards life which characterized the Polish writers of that time, including their belief in the Messianic mission of the Polish nation. She attended Mickiewicz's lectures at

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. Buis: *Les Théories Sociales de George Sand* (1910).

the Collège de France, and having founded in 1841 the *Revue Indépendante* in collaboration with Leroux, she made herself the interpreter of Polish Romanticism by writing articles in it on Mickiewicz and Krasinski, and by editing summaries of Mickiewicz's professorial courses. Madame Waldimir, George Sand's latest and most admirable biographer, who was the first to investigate the influence of these Polish emigrants, and notably of Mickiewicz, on her thought and work,<sup>1</sup> points out that the mystic and ecstatic elements so prominent in *Consuelo* and *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, and her faith in the people as a regenerating force in the world, as expressed in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, and *Le Péché de M. Antoine*, are derived quite as much from her knowledge of Polish Messianism as from the teaching of Pierre Leroux, except that whereas the Poles expected the revelation to come from a single nation, their own, or some inspired individual of that nation, George Sand expected it to come from a single class of all nations—the people.

From all this it would appear that George Sand's ideas were entirely derivative, that she was, to a greater extent even than Victor Hugo, "un écho sonore." At the same time, it is worth noticing that the theories she so readily absorbed and expressed were entirely in harmony with her own natural beliefs and aspirations. She was by temperament an idealist of the most exalted type, and a lover of liberty and equality. Of noble origin on her father's side, of plebeian birth on her mother's, she had more than mere and Romantic reasons for hating the bourgeoisie, who were securing all the power that the aristocracy had lost and the people not yet won. In her childhood and early youth George Sand was doubtless strengthened in her natural equalitarian leanings by the attitude of her grandmother, of whom she writes :

"Elle avait adopté la croyance de l'égalité autant qu'il était possible dans sa situation. Elle était à la hauteur de toutes les

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<sup>1</sup> *George Sand*, 3 vols., 1899-1912.



idées avancées de son temps . . . et voyait volontiers son égal en tout homme obscur et malheureux."

This account of the main influences which went to the making of George Sand's humanitarian novels has necessarily been long; but it is essential for an understanding of them and their place in the history of her time, for, as M. Strowski remarks: "Ses livres sont le miroir où la génération qui fit la Révolution de 1848 croyait se voir tout en n'y voyant que le mirage de ses généreuses utopies." Speaking of these novels, the Comte d'Hausonville says:

"Elle a connu toutes les souffrances et soulevé tous les problèmes dont la poids a pesé sur sa génération et sur la nôtre. Elle vivra non par la perfection de ses œuvres mais par leur côté, large et humanitaire."<sup>1</sup>

From the purely artistic point of view, however, George Sand had not attained such distinction in these novels of tendency as in a handful of *romans champêtres*, or idyllic stories of the peasantry and of country life, in which her sympathetic understanding of the French peasant and her love of the sights and sounds of the country-side find their most perfect expression. The series began in 1844 with *Jeanne*, and was continued by four exquisite masterpieces—*La Mare au Diable* (1846), *La Petite Fadette* (1849), *François de Champi* (1850), and *Les Maîtres Sonneurs* (1852). The scene of these novels is laid in her native Berry, and we wander across its fields and through its lanes, learn about its local superstitions and customs, and make the acquaintance of its sturdy, shrewd, and independent peasants, all the while conscious of that "visionary gleam" which George Sand captures for us as skilfully as Wordsworth.

Critics vary very considerably in their estimate of George Sand's work as a whole. The time-worn comparison between her idealism and Balzac's realism has something to be said for it, providing it be not forgotten that George Sand was an idealist with acute powers of observation, and that

<sup>1</sup> *George Sand: Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 15, 1878.



in her later novels, when she is neither expounding a thesis nor advocating a cause, her idealism is rather of the nature of poetic realism, for, to quote a remark of her own in her preface to *La Petite Fadette*, "la mission de l'artiste est de célébrer la douceur, la confiance, l'amitié et de rappeler ainsi aux hommes endurcis ou découragés que les mœurs pures, les sentiments tendres et l'équité primitive *sont ou peuvent être encore de ce monde.*" She is a better psychologist than Balzac, and is particularly skilful in delineating the artistic temperament—the musician, the actor, the poet—and in revealing the innermost feelings of a girl on the threshold of womanhood. Her miller (*Le Moulinier d'Angibault*), her bagpipers (*Les Maîtres Sonneurs*), her journeymen carpenters (*Le Compagnon du Tour de France*), her workers in mosaic (*Les Maîtres mosaïstes*), are as faithful renderings of country-folk as any to be found in Balzac's *Scènes de la Vie de Campagne*, though neither are quite true to life, for while George Sand almost invariably leaves out of the picture the baser instincts of her peasants, Balzac always ignores their nobler aspirations.

George Sand was a very facile writer, and her style is marked by unstudied grace and fluidity and at the same time by correctness. However unoriginal her ideas may have been, her style was entirely her own, and was influenced by no one. Unlike Balzac, she founded no school, though subsequent novels of country life in general, and the regional novel in particular, take their point of departure from her.

In Russia she long enjoyed an immense vogue, and both Dostoievski and Turgenev, two of the greatest Russian novelists of the century, owe much to her. The former points out in an essay, written in 1876, that at the time when George Sand's books were appearing, novels were the only form of foreign literature allowed into Russia, and her tales were so full of all the ideas and theories which the Russian Government was determined to hold at bay, that they were eagerly devoured as soon as they crossed the frontier, and helped the cause of freedom

George Sand's  
place in French  
literature

Her Influence  
in Russia

as much as, if not more than, any formal treatises could have done.

Another novelist whose tales were strongly imbued with the socialistic and humanitarian aspirations of the day was Eugène Sue (1804-1857), whose period of greatest success and popularity coincided with that of Alexandre Dumas. His most famous novels, *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-1843) and *Le Juif Errant* (1844-1845), both in ten volumes, are among the most notable specimens of the *roman-feuilleton*—that is to say, of novels written to appear in short sections in the daily press. Sue's narratives are prolix, complicated, ill-constructed, and ill-written; in a word, they are innocent of any artistic quality, but being in the highest degree sensational, they enjoyed immense popularity. These novels have a certain historical significance because they so effectively fulfilled their aim of spreading humanitarian and socialistic ideas among the masses. They undoubtedly helped to prepare the revolution of 1848, and it was perhaps in recognition of his services that in 1850 the Department of the Seine elected Eugène Sue as its representative in the National Assembly.

We now come to a writer who made the realistic novel of contemporary manners peculiarly his own—  

 Honoré de Balzac  
 (1799-1850)  
 Life
 
 Balzac, the greatest and most prolific novelist of the Romantic period. Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) was born at Tours, and educated first at the Collège de Vendôme, and then in Paris, where his family came to live in 1814. When Honoré was seventeen his father decided that he should train for the legal profession, and apprenticed him for eighteen months to an attorney, and for another eighteen months to a notary. On the completion of his law apprenticeship, Balzac, who since his school-days had been deeply interested in literature, decided to become a man of letters, and induced his unwilling parents to allow him to make a two years' experiment of earning a living by his pen. This was in 1819. Balzac immediately installed himself in a poorly furnished attic near the Arsenal on a small monthly allowance, and spent his first fifteen months as a free-lance

in writing a drama in verse on *Cromwell*. At the end of April, 1820, he read his finished tragedy to a gathering of his family and their friends, who voted it an unqualified failure. Nothing daunted, Balzac decided that tragedies were not in his line, and that henceforward he would devote himself to writing novels. The next five years were spent in catering for popular taste in wild, sensational tales on the lines of Pixérécourt and Pigault-Lebrun, spiced with that element of terror which the novels of Ann Radcliffe, Lewis, and Mathurin had introduced into the novel. That Balzac was not proud of such melodramatic productions as *L'Héritière de Birague*, *Argow la Pirate*, and *Jeanne la Pâle*, to mention only a few of them, is proved by the fact that he published them under divers pseudonyms. They were written mainly to prove that he could earn a living by his pen, but though he intentionally pandered to popular taste, he was not very successful in hitting the public fancy, and the meagre financial returns these tales brought him, caused him in 1825 to lay down his pen and turn bookseller, printer, and publisher. All his life Balzac was full of schemes for doubling and trebling his income by commercial enterprises, but he had no practical business qualities, and this first venture, like all those which succeeded it, was a complete failure. In 1828 the firm was declared bankrupt, and Balzac himself was so deeply in debt that it was not until ten years later that he was able to pay up, and then only by incurring new debts. This episode in Balzac's life has an important bearing upon his work, for his struggles with his creditors are reflected in many of his novels, while his persistent craving for wealth, which meant more to him than fame, explains the predominance of the money question throughout the *Comédie humaine*.

After the crash of 1828, Balzac once more turned to novel-writing as a means of livelihood, and, finding in it his true vocation, never again laid down his pen for the twenty-two years that remained to him of life. His real career as an author begins with *Les Chouans* (1829), which Saintsbury describes as "a Waverley novel Gallicized and Balzacified,"

and *La Peau de Chagrin* (1831), which is a cross between the supernatural and the psychological novel, and ends with the completion of *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine* (1848). Between 1829 and 1848 the history of Balzac's life may almost be said to be the history of his ninety-six novels, tales, and short stories.

In 1832 began his correspondence with Countess Eveline Hanska, a wealthy Polish woman of noble birth married to a Russian nobleman in the Ukraine. Fascinated by Balzac's novels, she wrote to him steadily for eighteen months before she had an opportunity of making his acquaintance, and after their first meeting at Neufchâtel in the spring of 1833, the correspondence continued on less platonic lines, and was only broken by their almost yearly meetings in Switzerland or Russia, until in 1848, seven years after the death of the lady's husband, Balzac went to stay with Madame Hanska in Russia, where in 1850 he married her. He brought

*Lettres à  
l'Étrangère*  
(1833-1848)

her back to Paris, and died of heart disease a few months later. Balzac's side of this correspondence, which has been preserved and published under the title *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, gives an almost complete autobiography of his life between 1833 and 1848.

His labours during these years can only be described as herculean, and only his iron constitution could have endured them as long as he did. He had generally two or three novels on the stocks at once, and often sat at his desk from twelve to eighteen hours at a stretch, fortifying himself with strong potations of black coffee. Sometimes he would be weeks without leaving the house. When, one wonders, did he find time for that close observation of contemporary life that makes his novels the valuable historical documents they are? Doubtless his two periods of practical life, i.e. his three years' apprenticeship to the law and his three years' business experience, stood him in good stead, as also his visits to the provinces, which fall mainly between 1833 and 1837, and to which his *Scènes de la Vie provinciale* owe so much. He had, moreover, an extraordinary gift of swift observation, of equally swift assimila-

Balzac's method  
of work



tion, and a prodigious memory, so that where to others, had they wished to do his work, a prolonged survey would have been indispensable, for him a mere glimpse sufficed, and his vigorous imagination did the rest. For Balzac's imagination was coupled with such a strong sense of reality, that it may be said without exaggeration that he intuitively divined the realities of the life that was going on around him, or as M. Canat puts it: "Il a presque tout tiré de son imagination, mais son imagination avait, à un degré incroyable, le don d'inventer la réalité."

Quite early in his literary career, in 1834 certainly, and probably already in 1831, Balzac, whose mind

The scheme of  
his novel-cycle

was constantly preoccupied with schemes on a grand scale, conceived the idea of making each of his novels, past and future, so many parts of a vast synthetic whole which was to represent every aspect of the life of his time, under the collective title, *Etudes de Mœurs*, with various subdivisions, of which more hereafter. In 1835 he planned two more parts, entitled *Etudes philosophiques* and *Etudes analytiques* respectively, remarking that in the three groups humanity will be described, judged, and analysed in a work which will be, as it were, the *Thousand and One Nights* of the West. In 1841 he gave to the whole the synthetic title, *La Comédie humaine*. Already in a short story, *La Fille aux yeux d'or* (1834), Balzac had spoken of Paris as a hell which would some day have its Dante. Henry Reeve, who was then living in Paris, and knew Balzac, relates in his *Correspondence* (i, p. 39),<sup>1</sup> that he suggested to him the title, *Diabolical Comedy*. Balzac with a stroke of genius struck a mean between divine and diabolical, and finally adopted the expression, *Comédie humaine*. Into the scheme elaborated in 1835 he fitted all his later novels and tales, and the titles of many more which he did not live to write. It falls into the following divisions:—

I. *Etudes de Mœurs*, of which Balzac said that it had its geography,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Revue de la Littérature Comparée*, vol. I (1922), p. 638. Une suggestion anglaise pour le titre de la *Comédie humaine*.



its genealogy, and its families, its places and things, its persons and facts; and which he subdivided as follows:

1. *Scènes de la Vie Privée*, in which his object was to represent instinctive emotions and sensations and youthful passions. The most important works belonging to this group are *La Maison du Chat qui Pelote* (1830), *Le Colonel Chabert* (1832), *La Femme de Trente Ans* (1834), and *Albert Savarus* (1842).

2. In *Scènes de la Vie de Province* he wished to show innocent hopes and violent passions in conflict with an interested view of life [*Eugénie Grandet* (1833), *Le Lys dans la Vallée* (1836), *Les Illusions perdues* (1837), *Ursule Mirouet* (1841), *Un Ménage de Garçon* (1842)].

3. *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne*. "Ici," says Balzac, "les sentiments vrais sont des exceptions et sont brisés dans le feu des intérêts, écrasés entre les rouages de ce monde mécanique . . . l'humanité n'a plus que deux formules, le trompeur et le trompé." To this group belong *Le Père Goriot* (1834), *Grandeur et Décadence de César Birotteau* (1837), *Les Parents Pauvres*, inclusive title of *La Cousine Bette* (1846) and *Le Cousin Pons* (1847); and *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine* (1847).

These first three groups were intended to exhaust the life of the individual as such. In the two next:

4. *Scènes de la Vie Politique* [*Un Episode sous la Terreur* (1830), *Une Ténébreuse affaire* (1844)], etc.; and

5. *Scènes de la Vie Militaire* [*Les Chouans* (1829), *Une Passion dans le Désert* (1830)], etc., Balzac tells us that he wished to interpret "les intérêts des masses, l'effroyable mouvement de la machine sociale, et les contrastes produits par les intérêts particuliers qui se mêlent à l'intérêt général." Finally, the

6. *Scènes de la Vie de Campagne* were to give a picture of "le repos après le mouvement, les paysages après les intérieurs, les douces et uniformes occupations de la vie des champs après le tracas de Paris; mais aussi les mêmes intérêts, la même lutte, quoique affaiblie comme les passions se trouvent adoucies dans la solitude" [*Le Médecin de Campagne* (1833), *Le Curé de Village* (1839), *Les Paysans* (1844)].

## II. *Etudes philosophiques*:

From a detailed description of contemporary society in all its aspects Balzac proceeded to a study of the causes which had produced it—

*La Peau de Chagrin* (1831), *Louis Lambert* (1832), *La Recherche de l'Absolu* (1834), *Séraphita* (1834-1835); and thence in

III. *Etudes analytiques* [*La Physiologie du Mariage* (1829), *Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale*], which are not novels at all, to analyse the principles lying behind the causes.

The arbitrariness of all these subdivisions is proved, if proof were needed, by the fact that Balzac himself was

constantly moving his novels from one division to another. The plan is of interest, nevertheless, because it shows how definitely he envisaged all the tales of the *Comédie humaine* as interdependent parts of an organic whole, and because it illustrates his love of system and generalization.

Balzac was the first to regard the novel as a human document, and later generations have found his novels the valuable documents he intended them to be. In his *Preface* of 1842 he tells us that his idea of representing contemporary life as he found it, without moral or artistic pre-occupations, proceeded from Scott : what the Waverley novels had done for the past, his novels of contemporary life should do for the present. But under the influence of certain scientific ideas which he adopted from the biologists, Cuvier and Sainte-Hilaire, Balzac amplified and developed this theory by drawing a parallel between the species of the animal world and the species of the social world, and by endeavouring to show that men like animals are moulded and fashioned by the influence of their environment.

"L'idée première de la *Comédie humaine* . . . vint d'une comparaison entre l'humanité et l'animalité. . . . La société ne fait-elle pas de l'homme, suivant les milieux où son action se déploie, autant d'hommes différents qu'il y a de variétés en zoologie ? . . . Il a donc existé, il existera donc de tous temps des Espèces sociales comme il y a des Espèces zoologiques. Si Buffon a fait un magnifique ouvrage, en essayant de représenter dans un livre l'ensemble de la zoologie, n'y avait il pas une œuvre de ce genre à faire pour la société ?"—*Preface* of 1842.

And it was this history that Balzac undertook to write.

"J'ai entrepris l'histoire de toute la Société, j'ai exprimé souvent mon plan dans cette seule phrase : une génération est un drame à quatre ou cinq mille personnages saillants. Ce drame, c'est mon livre." (Letter to Hippolyte Castille, 11 Oct., 1846.)

True to its author's intention the *Comédie humaine* is a vast and detailed picture of French society under the First Empire, the Restoration, and the Monarchy of July. As Mr. Hudson has pointed out, the period covered is almost coextensive with Balzac's

The novel as a  
human docu-  
ment

Historical  
value of the  
*Comédie  
humaine*

own life for "it may be said to begin in *Les Chouans* with the Breton rising of 1799, the year of his birth, and to the end in 1846, when, in *La Cousine Bette*, the infamous Baron Hulot (brother of the General Hulot of *Les Chouans*), after the death of his saintly wife, marries his cook."<sup>1</sup> This span of years is represented in a work which has the grandiose proportions of an epic. We are given pictures of salon-life, we are introduced into bourgeois circles both in Paris and in the provinces, and are given some idea of the peasant life of the period. All the professions are represented: doctors, lawyers, priests, journalists, artists, business men, bankers, tradesmen, clerks, and servants are placed in their environments and viewed in their relationship to them, for Balzac insists on regarding men not as mere individuals but as social units determined by the complex system of modern civilization. Hence the importance he attaches to the antecedents, surroundings, professions, and habits and way of life of his characters, which are all described in the minutest detail, nothing being left to the imagination. Things and places are as important to him as people, for he regards them as part of the human creature to whom they belong or of whom they constitute as it were the outer shell, modified to his uses. Thus a street, a house, a room, an office, a workshop, help to explain the human beings who dwell therein (cf., for instance, his description of the avaricious Molineux's apartment in *César Birotteau*, p. 392). Here Balzac's memory and extraordinary powers of observation stood him in good stead. Places not only remained photographed on his mind, but he carried away and could render consummately the atmosphere which lingers round them. Of the two to three thousand characters who make themselves known to us in the *Comédie humaine*, even the most minor are drawn by a master hand with all their physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities, so that once we have made their acquaintance we are never likely to forget them. With regard to the plots of his novels, Balzac does not, as nearly all his predecessors did, make

<sup>1</sup> Hudson: *French Literature*, p. 249 (1919).

love the sole and engrossing concern of his heroes. Love has its place in his novels, but it is a subordinate one ; and the chief characters are possessed by some other master passion—envy and jealousy (*Cousine Bette*), avarice (Grandet in *Eugénie Grandet*), parental love which has degenerated into criminal weakness (*Père Goriot*), the passion for scientific research and invention (Balthazar Claès in *La Recherche de l'Absolu*). But by far the greater number of them are actuated by a desire for wealth either for its own sake or as a means of social advancement. (Cf. *César Birotteau*, M. Hulot in *La Cousine Bette*, and others too numerous to mention.) And this is natural, for Balzac's characters are drawn from every grade of the middle-classes, whose chief ideal under their bourgeois king, Louis-Philippe, was material prosperity.

"Vous vous abusez, cher ange" [says Celestin Crevel to the Duchess], "si vous croyez que c'est le roi Louis-Philippe qui règne et il ne s'abuse pas là-dessus. Il sait, comme nous tous, qu'au-dessus de la Charte il y a la sainte, la vénérée, la solide, l'aimable la gracieuse, la belle, la noble, la jeune, la toute-puissante pièce de cinq sous. . . . 'Dieu des Juifs, tu l'emportes, a dit le grand Racine.'"

He is the first writer to show us not merely how money is spent or procured by questionable means—Le Sage, Dancourt, and Regnard had done that—but the various ways in which money is made, whether it be by honest toil, commercial enterprise, speculation in land or on the Stock Exchange, or in political and diplomatic circles ; hence the stress laid on the means of making it, and Balzac's detailed descriptions of the mechanism or technique of a profession.

In carrying out the gigantic task that he had set himself, it was inevitable that there should be some one-sidedness and some omissions. These were determined by Balzac's personal prejudices and by the limitations of his understanding of the finer and more elusive things in life. He hated the bourgeoisie as intensely as any of the Romantics, but instead of ignoring it in his work, as they did, he gave it the chief rôle, though anything but an enviable one. His picture of the

Balzac's  
limitations as  
an observer of  
contemporary  
manners



middle-classes of his day and of their sordidness is true in the main, but naturally it does not suffer from under-emphasis. Such members of the aristocracy as appear on his pages are conventional and unconvincing, and he has little of interest to say about peasants and the humbler townsmen. Further, Balzac seems to have had no interest in, or understanding of, the religious and social ideals with which his age was rife, ideals which at an early date aroused the enthusiasm of George Sand, and which influenced the later work of Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Michelet.

Most French critics reproach Balzac with writing in  
 His style a style which is often incorrect and always without distinction ; some even go so far as to call his style bad. Perhaps a distinction should be made : he is indeed often involved and pretentious in his rather too frequent disquisitions, but when he is simply narrating, describing, or letting his characters speak for themselves, his style is very true to life. This means that it is far from perfect, yet had he written his novels in any other style it would probably have detracted from the sense of reality which they leave upon our minds.

It will be clear from all that has been said about Balzac  
 Balzac's place among the Romantics that though the period of his literary activity corresponds with the rise, triumph, and decline of the Romantic Movement in France, he was, if we except Sainte-Beuve, less of a Romantic than any of his contemporaries. Romantic traits he undoubtedly has, and some of the worst. Many of his plots are wild and incoherent, many of his situations extraordinary, while his leading characters, like Victor Hugo's, are sometimes so excessively simplified and endowed with such inordinate individuality that now and again they give the impression of being superhuman monsters. This is what Zola meant when he remarked that certain parts of the *Comédie humaine* have "l'air d'un rêve énorme fait par un homme éveillé." Again, like Victor Hugo, and with as little justification, Balzac fancies himself in the rôle of thinker and reformer, and frequently intervenes in the narrative



with declamatory speeches on moral and would-be philosophical topics. Typical examples of this tendency are his apology for Catholicism in *Le Médecin de Campagne* and his digressions on occultism in *Le Cousin Pons*. As is the case with most of the Romantics the occult and the supernatural had a strong fascination for him, and they have an important place in the plots of such novels and tales as *Louis Lambert*, *La Peau de Chagrin*, *Séraphita*, and *Ursule Mirouet*. On the other hand, Balzac differs from the Romantics in choosing to represent ordinary everyday life with all its prosaic detail, and in endeavouring to treat his subjects quite objectively. He does not introduce himself prominently into his novels, nor does he view everything in relation to his own personality. There are indeed recollections of his school-days in *Louis Lambert*, of his student life in *La Peau de Chagrin*, and of his first meeting with the Countess Hanska in *Albert Savarus*, but his novels are not confessions of his life and spiritual development in the sense that George Sand's, for instance, were of hers. Balzac stands at the parting of the ways with a backward glance on the road that others were still treading, and one foot firmly planted on a road along which the majority of succeeding novelists were to follow him.

When we look back over the development of the French novel between 1825 and 1850, when we consider the bulk, variety, novelty, and excellence achieved in this branch of literature, we are filled with wonder and admiration. Hugo, Dumas, Stendhal, George Sand, and Balzac compassed singly and together (the remark is Professor Saintsbury's) "an achievement of things never yet achieved; an acquisition and settlement of territory which had never been previously explored."

Before speaking of the artistic short story which was one of the favourite forms of literature at this time, it may be well to define what constitutes this particular kind of narrative. It is a mistake to think that length is the determining factor which separates the short story from the novel, for

## II. THE SHORT STORY

Its characteristics

this is a result rather than a cause of the difference between the two forms. There are a number of novels which are no longer than a "long" short story—Chateaubriand's *René* and *Atala*, for instance, or Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*, run to no more pages than some of Maupassant's longer *contes*. The essential distinction lies elsewhere. A good short story is not a "novel in a nutshell." It can no more be expanded into a novel without losing thereby than a really good novel can be condensed into a short story. This does not mean that its range is any less wide or that its characters have any less need to be real and convincing, but it does mean that whereas in a novel there must be either profusion and variety of incident or development of character, and there may be both, in a short story there is neither. Here the plot is of the simplest, if indeed it is not a mere situation, and the characters are drawn at a definite point in their development. To be a good writer of short stories an author must have the gift of selection, great skill in abbreviating and compressing, so as to tell or suggest as much as possible in the fewest possible words. Further, he must not be too fond of psychological analysis or of expressing his personal ideas and feelings, and his style must be terse and vivid. Some of these methods may be, and often are, adopted by the novelist, but in his case they are not essential for success. Indeed, were he to use them all simultaneously the result would be not a novel but a short story. Barry Pain provides the key to the difference between novel and short story when he says: "The novelist gives more to the reader and asks less. The short story writer gives less and asks more." In other words, the novelist satisfies our curiosity by providing us with all the information necessary to our understanding of characters and events, and often much else besides the working out of a thesis, his own reflections, side-issues, by-plots, etc. The writer of short stories on the other hand stimulates our imagination, his method being pre-eminently rich in suggestion. Much is merely indicated, and following up the barest hints the imaginative reader easily outsteps the actual

limits of the time and place in which the story runs its course. It will generally be found that writers of fiction have excelled in one or other of these forms, but rarely in both, and this because they require for their successful treatment qualities which are seldom found in conjunction.

In England we have no specific word for the short story.

The short  
story in  
France before  
the Romantic  
period

The French have both *conte* and *nouvelle*, and it is natural that they should, for "they order this matter better in France." In the Middle Ages already she led the way in the short story, first in verse (the *fabliaux*), then in prose, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, *Petit Jehan de Saintre*, *Jehan de Paris*, etc. In the sixteenth century Marguerite de Navarre, Despériers, Noël du Fail made this form peculiarly their own. But the next age neglected it and for two obvious reasons: in the seventeenth century analysis, first of sentiment and later of character, was preferred to the recording of external incidents, while during the great classical age, when one might have expected the short story to appeal to literary men because it needed objective and selective treatment, they despised both it and the novel because they were neither of them an inheritance from classical antiquity and hence had neither status nor rules. At the end of the seventeenth century the short story reappeared in the guise of the fairy-tale, the vogue of which lasted well into the eighteenth century. Hitherto its content had always been light and generally licentious, but during the second half of the Age of Enlightenment there arose a new kind of tale with a serious intention, the best examples of which are Voltaire's *Contes*, each of which gives ironical expression to some philosophical idea, and Marmontel's *Contes Moraux* (1773-1776), which as their title indicates were merely written to point a moral. As none of the tales in these two collections are told for their own sake, and as the ulterior motive is throughout apparent, they are a mere offshoot of the artistic short story which, born in the Middle Ages as a simple everyday narrative, came to life again as the fairy tale at the end of the seventeenth century, and at the

beginning of the nineteenth century re-entered French literature for good. It is a significant fact that it did so most frequently in the form of the fantastic tale, i.e. a tale with a supernatural element, a form of narrative which, like the legend, fairy story, or any tale in which mystery plays a part, depends for its effect on suggestion and delicate handling.

During this period the first short stories of any literary value came from the pen of Xavier de Maistre (1764-1852), who first made his name by writing, during a period of convalescence, the famous *Voyage Autour de ma Chambre* (1694), in which he describes all the objects by which he is surrounded in his room and transcribes the memories and new trains of thought they awaken in his mind. His short stories: *Le Lepreux de la Cité d'Aoste* (1811), a dialogue between a passing soldier and a leper shut up in a tower, *Les Prisonniers du Caucase* (1814), a clever sketch of Russian character, and *La Jeune Sibérienne*, the story of a young girl who journeys from Siberia to Saint Petersburg on foot to crave the Czar's pardon for her father, are pathetic little tales of human misfortune, redeemed from sentimentality by an amiable sense of humour, and written in a style remarkable for its ease and purity.

During the Romantic period the writing of short stories was encouraged by the development of the literary review, especially after 1830, when such important periodicals as the *Revue de Paris*, founded in 1829, and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, founded in 1831, to mention only the most important, offered hospitality in their pages to original contributions of this kind. Nearly all the best tales written at this period made their first appearance in one periodical or another, and only later were they collected in volume form.

The four great poets of the Romantic school tried their hand at the novel, but both Lamartine and Victor Hugo left the short story severely alone. For obvious reasons it was too narrow a form for the display of their particular



gifts. Vigny and Musset, who had a greater feeling for form and artistic restraint, attempted the short story, and not unsuccessfully, though they were neither of them to the manner born, the former because his tales are the embodiments of an idea, the latter because his are too much a revelation of their author's personal feelings. Nevertheless, the three stories which Vigny collected under the title *Servitude et grandeur militaires* (1835), are far superior to his novels, and their underlying thesis, i.e. that the only consolation in the soldier's lot of servitude lies in the duty of unquestioning obedience, is not inartistically obtrusive because there is such an intimate connection between the idea and the plot.

Musset's *Contes et Nouvelles* (1837-1853) are superior to his one novel, if such it can be called, the *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, but they are less perfect than his plays, though the best of them, *Croisilles*, *Histoire d'un Merle Blanc*, *Mimi Pinson*, *Pierre et Camille*, and *Le Fils du Titien*, for instance, have the same peculiar charm of mingled tenderness and irony which is one of the characteristics of the *Comédies et Proverbes*.

The two writers who at this period made their names by their novels, and by their novels alone, George Sand and Balzac, both wrote short stories, but the former was so little a mistress of the craft that her ventures in this line are negligible. Balzac, apart from his *Contes drôlatiques*, scurrilous tales closely and cleverly modelled on Rabelais, wrote a number of short stories which are very unequal in value. He was too exuberant, too fond of detail and digression, to be easily successful in so concentrated a form. In some ten of his early ventures, however, contributed mostly to the *Revue de Paris*, and in one or two later ones, he achieved considerable distinction, notably in *L'Elixir de longue Vie*, *Le Réquisitionnaire*, *Le Chef-d'œuvre Inconnu* and *Jésus-Christ en Flandre*, *L'Auberge rouge*, and the longer *Curé de Tours*, all written in 1831, and in *La Messe de l'Athée* (1836) and *Pierre Grasson* (1840). In these tales



Balzac is successful because their themes are such that even he realized that he must not labour or prolong them. Having chosen either a plot which compelled rapid and concentrated narrative, or a delicate psychological case, or a situation in which the supernatural played a part, he dealt with each faithfully in short-story fashion. On the other hand, he wrote numbers of would-be short stories which are really truncated or foreshortened novels.

And this brings us to four men, three of whom are, first and foremost, writers of short stories, and who, though they wrote much besides, owe their place in literature to their mastership of this craft : Charles Nodier, Gérard de Nerval, and Prosper Mérimée, while the fourth and greatest of the quartette, Théophile Gautier, made his mark in no less than three literary kinds—the short story, the novel, and lyrical poetry. All of them took a rare delight in the

THE FOUR  
GREAT WRITERS  
OF SHORT  
STORIES DURING  
THE ROMANTIC  
MOVEMENT  
mysterious and the uncanny, and more particularly in the supernatural, but while the best tales of Nodier, Gérard de Nerval, and Théophile Gautier are almost exclusively of this fantastic kind, those of Prosper Mérimée may be almost evenly divided into tales of fantasy and heroic, tragic, or ironical stories of real life.

Their fondness  
for the fantastic  
tale  
The fantastic tale, like the fairy-story, is characterized by the fact that the plot or situation is influenced by some marvellous agency—in the one by friendly fairies or spirits whom their human protégés neither fear nor distrust ; in the other by some obscure supernatural power which fills the reader with apprehension or terror. Hence the atmosphere of the fairy-story is smiling and serene, that of the fantastic tale cruel and disquieting. It was Romanticism that introduced the fantastic element into French literature, Romanticism which in its early stages had such a passion for the Middle Ages, a time when superstitious terrors were particularly prevalent. The tendency was further strengthened by foreign influences—on the one hand by the English “ tale of terror,” of which the best examples are Anne Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1795), Lewis’s *The Monk*

(1795), and Mathurin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), in which the supernatural, explained or unexplained, plays such an important part; on the other by the German folk-tales and fantasy pieces, of which Fouqué's *Undine* (1811), the story of a water-sprite without a soul; Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl* (1814), "the man without a shadow"; and Hoffmann's *Fantastic Tales* (1814-1822), are the most notable examples. Hoffmann particularly had an extraordinary influence in France.<sup>1</sup> He became the subject of admiring articles in the leading French reviews, and his works were rapidly translated. His stories appealed to the French because, in spite of their fantastical and supernatural elements, they are never so exaggerated as to seem impossible, for, as Balzac said of him: "Il est le poète de ce qui n'a pas l'air d'exister, et qui néanmoins a vie." In this the best of his French disciples followed him: their fantastic tales are not of the extreme type—they are never merely horrible or grotesque, and the best of them have something of the fairy-tale atmosphere.

The first to make such expeditions into the land of dream was Charles Nodier (1793-1844), the oldest in years of the famous Cénacle which met in his rooms at the Arsenal. He very early came under German and English influences, and wrote various ultra-romantic novels before there was such a thing as a Romantic school. *Les Proscrits* (1802), *Le Peintre de Salzbourg* (1803), *Jean Sbogar* (1818), out-Werther Werther in melancholy, and *Laure Ruthwen ou les Vampires*, etc., are tales of terror in the English style. Nodier may indeed be said to have been the earliest of French Romantics—"le plus matinal au téméraire assaut," as Sainte-Beuve puts it. But he was to find his true vocation in the writing of short stories, which were a sort of compound of the French fairy-

<sup>1</sup> Curiously enough, Hoffmann was himself a great admirer of a little-known French writer of the eighteenth century, a certain Jacques Cazotte, whose *Diable Amoureux* (1772) is the first literary example of the fantastic tale. Hoffmann brought it to the notice of his French followers, and Gérard de Nerval re-edited it.

tale and of the German Märchen and fantastic story. Some of them are rather long—too long from the artistic point of view ; but they are all fine, and the shorter ones are masterpieces of their kind. The collection in three volumes, entitled respectively *Contes de la Veillée*, *Contes Fantastiques*, and *Nouvelles*, is a delight from end to end ; but if a choice of the stories they contain must be made, then let it be *Trilby ou le Lutin d'Argail* (1822), *Jean François les Bas-Bleus*, *Le Songe d'Or*, *La Fée aux Miettes* (1832), *La Combe de l'Homme Mort*, *Smarra*, *La Neuvaine de la Chandeleur* (1839), *La Légende de Sœur Beatrix* (1838), and the delightful three-page *Histoire du Chien de Brisquet* (1844).

Nodier's immediate follower in this line, Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855), is undeservedly neglected in most French literary histories, or only mentioned as having translated *Faust* at the early age of eighteen, and translated it so well that Goethe remarked to Eckermann that he had never understood his own poetry better than in reading this French version. Gérard de Nerval, whose real name was Labrunie, made his translation while he was still a student at the Lycée Charlemagne, and soon after, Théophile Gautier who had been his school-friend, bore him off into the thick of the romantic battle ; but Gérard de Nerval, like Sainte-Beuve and Gautier himself, was too detached a nature to remain long a member of any group, though he differed from both of them in that while they were both essentially men of a positive turn of mind, he for ever dwelt on the fringes of dream and reality. So much was this the case that he suffered occasional attacks of insanity, and was more than once the inmate of an asylum. In the intervals he travelled much in France, Germany, and the East, and wrote, intermittently, poetry, plays, impressions of travel [*De Paris à Cythère* (1848), *Voyage en Orient* (1851)], experimented in translating from Schiller, Hoffmann, Richter, and Heine, and produced those strange stories and sketches collected under the titles *La Bohème galante* and *Les Filles du Feu* (*Faces in the Fire*), and the dream pieces *Sylvie* and *Aurélia*. These stories are very

Gérard de  
Nerval  
(1808–1855)

difficult to describe, for, like their author, they are "such stuff as dreams are made of," being at once lucid and visionary. They show clear traces of Gérard de Nerval's interest in the occult sciences, and through them all runs a strain of music and poetry. That he ranks among the masters of French prose is beyond dispute, and his best verse, which has something of the haunting yet elusive quality of Verlaine's, deserves to be better known than it is. On January 26, 1855, Gérard's body was found hanging from an iron grating in a dark alley near the Châtelet. It is not certain whether, in an access of insanity, he committed suicide or was the victim of a gang of murderers.

With Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870) we are brought back to the real world, a world in which elemental passions and strange forces indeed play their part, but are only introduced in order to explain the characters and suggest the atmosphere of the time and country with which his stories deal.

Prosper  
Mérimée  
(1803-1870)

In his early twenties Mérimée fell under the influence of romanticism, and his earliest literary works were two clever mystifications, *Le Théâtre de Clara Gazul* (1825), which purported to be the translation of the dramatic works of a Spanish actress, and *La Guzla* (1827), which was given to the public as the literal version of some Illyrian poems. To this period also belongs the historical novel, *Chronique de Charles IX* (1829), to which reference has already been made. But Mérimée was soon to quit the ranks of the romantic army, though not as a deserter. Taking with him into his retirement just enough love of local colour and picturesque detail to refresh the sources of his inspiration, and leaving behind all tendency to declaim, digress, or attitudinize, he found his true line as a writer of tales and stories. These, some twenty in number, which vary in length between the one hundred and fifty pages of *Colomba* and the six of *L'Enlèvement de la Redoute*, are the work of one of the most consummate story-tellers that France has ever known. This is all the more remarkable in that Mérimée was a scholar by temperament and training, and only by accident a teller



of tales. He is often compared with Stendhal, who was a family friend, and undoubtedly influenced him. Both have the same interest in the psychology of strong, energetic characters, the same distrust of emotion, the same acute sense of the value of significant detail; but while Stendhal liked to work on a large canvas, Mérimée preferred the limitations imposed by a small one. Never allowing his own personality to intrude, with a few swift strokes of the brush he reveals and fixes character in a passing gesture or a significant word. A flawless example of this method is to be found in Don José's first encounter with Carmen in the story of that name. He is by preference a delineator of violent primitive natures, who are so dominated by the passions or impulses—generally love, revenge, or jealousy—which bring the stories to their inevitable issue, that they seem almost embodiments of them. Yet there is no trace of exaggeration or abstraction, largely because Mérimée was so careful in the choice of his settings. In the gipsy-haunted Andalusia (*Carmen*), the brigand-infested scrubs of Corsica (*Colomba*, *Mateo Falcone*), the wild Lithuanian forests (*Lokis*), on the African coast (*Tamango*), primitive passions, even primitive superstitions, have a probability, a reality, which would be impossible in a more sophisticated setting. Even the stories with a supernatural element—*La Vision de Charles XI* (1830); *Les Âmes du Purgatoire* (1834), a rendering of an Italian folk-tale; *La Vénus d'Ille* (1837), the story of the ring given to Venus; *Djoumane*, a dream piece; *Lokis*, the story of a werewolf—are so full of natural detail that in reading them we lose all sense of their improbability. As for his more sophisticated stories, *Arsène Guillot*, *Le Vase Etrusque*, *Le Parti de Trictrac*, *La Chambre Bleue*, etc., whether they be tragic, comic, or neither, they have every quality that a good short story should have. Here, again, our interest is never allowed to flag for a moment; with never a word too much and never a word too little, and with an inevitability of phrase which reaches the highest pitch of artistic perfection, Mérimée sketches his characters, the events in which they are concerned, and the atmosphere in



which they move, in such a way that subject, character, narrative, and style are distilled, as it were, into an essence, which our imagination is free to dilute as it pleases.

Mérimée is generally claimed as a forerunner of realism, if not as an actual realist, but romantic tendencies, held, it is true, in check, were strong within him. As Dowden acutely remarks, "The egoism of the romantic school appears in Mérimée inverted; it is the egoism not of effusion, but of disdainful reserve."

With the exception of *Lokis*, all Mérimée's stories were written before 1850. After that date he contributed nothing original to literature. In 1848 he threw himself into the study of Russian, and for the next twelve years, through the translations of Pushkin, Gogol, and Turgenev, and the articles on Russian history and literature which he contributed regularly to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he awakened in France an interest in the Russian novel which was to bear fruit later in the century.

Mérimée's almost exact contemporary, who began to write short stories a little later, and left off a little later too, was Théophile Gautier (1811-1872).

His earliest tales, *Les Jeune France*, delightfully humorous sketches of the follies and excesses of the youthful romantics, appeared in 1833, while his last, but by no means his best, fantastic tale, *Spirite*, was published in 1867. All Gautier's finest short stories are to be found in the volumes entitled *Nouvelles* (1845) and *Romans et Contes* (1857), and, both as regards style and matter, two more entrancing books it would be hard to find.

With the exception of *Les Jeune France*, most of his tales are of the fantastic or supernatural order. The gem among them all is a ghost-story entitled *La Mort Amoureuse* (1836), but there are many others which do not fall far below it—*Le Roi Candaule*, for instance, *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, *Le Pied de la Momie*, *Avatar*, and *La Toison d'Or*. Gautier was endowed with extraordinarily vivid descriptive powers, together with a very real sense of humour, a rare quality in French writers generally, and signally absent from the work

of most of his romantic contemporaries. He shows the same qualities in his novels *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) and *Le Capitaine Fracasse* (published in 1863, but written much earlier), which, despite the impropriety of the former, rank among the masterpieces of French fiction. Besides novels and tales, Gautier wrote some delightful animal sketches (*Ménagerie Intime* and *Le Paradis des Chats*), accounts of his travels in Spain, Turkey, and Russia, and several volumes of literary and art criticism. He was also a poet, and in this connection we shall meet him again as a link between the Romantic and the Parnassian schools.

## CHAPTER VII

### HISTORY DURING THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

FROM the time of the Renaissance until after the French Revolution the only noteworthy books written for the general reader (excluding memoirs) which can lay claim to be ranked as historical works are Bossuet's *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* and *Histoire des Variations*, Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, and Voltaire's *Essai sur les Mœurs* and *Siècle de Louis XIV.* The first two give us history as seen through the eyes of a theologian, the third deals with the philosophy of law and politics rather than with history, while the two last are histories in the sense in which we now understand the term. In spite of their importance, however, these five works have small artistic or scientific merit when compared with the history written during the nineteenth century. The historical work produced in more recent times is learned rather than literary, but during the earlier part of the last century historians won renown by a combination of scientific and artistic qualities, and hence their writings have a literary as well as an historical value.

The reasons for the efflorescence of historical studies in

France during the earlier nineteenth century are numerous, and most of them are the direct or indirect outcome of the Revolution. The upheaval of 1789 awakened in the breasts of Frenchmen the patriotic feelings which had long lain dead or dormant, and taught them to consider their traditional customs and national institutions from a critical and historical point of view. There was a natural desire to

History in  
France before  
the nineteenth  
century

Reasons for the  
development of  
historical study  
and research  
in the early  
nineteenth  
century

find out and explain the remote causes which had made the Revolution possible, and it soon became evident that, in order to do this, it was necessary to go back a long way and, by consulting original sources, such as letters, memoirs, and documents relating to public and private life, endeavour to understand not merely the attitude of the ruling classes, but, more important still, the life, manners, and way of thought of the middle classes, and of the people. Moreover, the violent rupture with the *ancien régime* brought about by the Revolution made the past history of France a kind of closed cycle which could be viewed in perspective and as a whole.

Then, again, once the despotism of Napoleon was at an end, parliamentary government and the freedom of the press gave a great incentive to the formation of political parties. Now the content of history generally reflects the interests of the age in which it is written, and since nearly all the great French historians of the first half of the nineteenth century were either politicians or men deeply interested in politics, they either sought justification for their theories in past history or wrote history to prove the truth of their political beliefs.

A further impetus to the writing of history was given by the removal of most of the obstacles which had formerly stood in the way of serious historical study and research. Hitherto secular and ecclesiastical censorship had made the historian's profession a perilous one. Mézerai had been imprisoned in the Bastille for stating that the Franks were of Germanic and not of Gallic race, and Voltaire got into trouble with the authorities for publishing his *Siècle de Louis XIV.* Under the Napoleonic rule the same danger beset the historian's path, but under the Restoration and the July Monarchy there was nothing to prevent him from setting forth what he found to be historically true, from judging and criticizing past events. Formerly it had been difficult for the historian to consult the documents necessary for his researches, for they were scattered up and down the country, and were often in private hands. Now such docu-

ments and artistic and historical treasures as remained after the vandals of the Revolution had done their work of destruction were collected in public libraries and museums. We know that it was while wandering through the Musée des Monuments français, founded by the Convention, that Michelet felt the first stirrings of his vocation as an historian. Many of the documents and materials which were thus brought to light were published, the most important collections being that entitled *Mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*, the one hundred and thirty-one volumes of which appeared between 1819 and 1829; and the *Mémoires de Saint-Simon* (1829-1830), which had lain unpublished as their author left them over a century earlier, and which proved such a valuable mine of information for the latter part of the age of Louis XIV.

Before the Revolution, history had never been a recognized subject of study either in schools and universities. It had had no place in the curriculum of the Jesuits, the chief educators of the youth of Europe, nor was it even a university subject until 1769, when a Chair of History and Morals was founded at the Collège de France—the only one in France at that date. But at the time of which we are now speaking, historical professorships were instituted in Paris and in the provincial universities, and this also gave a new incentive to historical study and research. All these happenings made it possible for Thierry to write in 1834:

“Dès 1823 . . . j'eus le bonheur de voir ce que je désirais le plus, les travaux historiques prendre une haute place dans la faveur populaire, et des écrivains de premier ordre s'y consacrer de préférence. . . . Un tel concours d'efforts et de talents donna lieu à cette opinion, déjà très répandue, que l'histoire serait le cachet du *xix<sup>e</sup>* siècle et qu'elle lui donnerait son nom, comme la philosophie avait donné le sien au *xviii<sup>e</sup>*.”

There was yet another influence which had its share in the renovation and reshaping of historical literature, and which in some ways strengthened and in others opposed the political and scientific influences to which reference has already been



made. This was the Romantic movement. Inasmuch as the Romantics preferred to choose their subjects from the national past rather than from antiquity, and reacted against the tendency of French classical literature to deal only with the universal and permanent elements in human life and thought, their influence on the writing of history was wholly good, for it is the individual and the transitory aspect of an historical period, the differences between the past and the present rather than the similarities, which make history the fascinating study it is. It was this search for local colour and the fact that the historians of the period were gifted with a strong historical imagination that transformed what would otherwise have been mere learned works into vivid and animated representations of past realities. The impetus for these evocations of the past came admittedly in the first instance from Chateaubriand and Walter Scott, and more particularly from *Les Martyrs*, to which Thierry traces the origin of his historical vocation, and from *Quentin Durward*, which in France was the prime favourite among Scott's novels. There is, of course, in any case a close connection between narrative history and the historical romance, for, as the brothers Goncourt truly remark: "L'histoire c'est du roman qui a été, le roman c'est de l'histoire que aurait pu être." But there was also a bad side to the influence of romanticism, as may be seen very clearly in the later work of Michelet and Quinet, and this consisted in a fondness for declamation, exalted sentiment, and Utopian dreams.

It is usual to divide the historians of the first half of the nineteenth century into two main groups—the philosophical and political school, whose chief representatives are Guizot, Thiers, and Mignet; and the narrative or romantic school, inaugurated by Michaud and continued by De Barante and Thierry. Michelet must be dealt with separately, for he is too individual both in his historical outlook and in his methods to be styled a member of either group.

Both these schools arose simultaneously. The men who

The two  
schools of  
historians

form the great pleiad of historians, Guizot, Thierry, Mignet, Thiers, and Michelet, were all of the same generation, the first being born in 1787 and the four last between 1795 and 1798. As their methods frequently overlap, it is well to remember that the division into schools is somewhat artificial and misleading, though it is useful as an indication of general tendencies.

The romantic or descriptive school of historians endeavoured to make history a picturesque and dramatic narrative in which the men and ages of the past live again in their natural setting, with all their outward characteristics and peculiarities. The patriarch of this school was Joseph François Michaud (1767-1839), who, under the influence of Chateaubriand's *Martyrs*, in 1811 began his *Histoire des Croisades* (1811-1822). He was the first to give a sympathetic interpretation to the modern world of the greatest religious movement of the Middle Ages, and to show how the Crusades contributed to the development of European civilization. Michaud's narrative is vivid, though less pictorial than that of his immediate successor, Barante (1782-1866), whose *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne* (1824-1826), based on the chronicles of Froissart, Monstrelet, and Commines, has been compared to a vast tapestry, on which the outstanding figures are Du Guesclin and the Black Prince, Joan of Arc and Louis XI. Barante was an enthusiastic admirer of Scott's novels, and it was no mere accident that made him choose for his subject the century of *Quentin Durward*. The duty of the historian, he says in his preface, is to make the past live again before the eyes of his readers, and this is impossible if he insists on writing of the past from the standpoint of the present. "J'ai tenté de restituer à l'histoire elle-même l'attrait que le roman historique lui a emprunté. Elle doit être avant tout exacte et sérieuse ; mais il m'a semblé qu'elle pouvait être en même temps vraie et vivante." With this object in view, Barante abstains from all personal judgments or reflections upon the events he recounts. The result is a delightful and

I. THE  
ROMANTIC  
OR DESCRIPTIVE SCHOOL

vivid narrative, marred from the historical point of view by a lack of the critical sense and of exact scholarship.

Far greater both as an historian and a literary artist than either Michaud or Barante was Augustin Thierry <sup>Thierry</sup> (1795-1856), who is rightly regarded as the father of modern French history, for it was he who defined and formulated the confused aspirations of his predecessors. As a boy he devoured the novels of Walter Scott, and at the age of fifteen he tells us how Chateaubriand's *Martyrs* fired his imagination, and how he marched up and down his room shouting the war-song of the Franks—"Pharamond, Pharamond, nous avons combattu avec l'épée"—and how he later came to regard this moment of enthusiasm as decisive for his vocation.

At the end of his university career, Thierry fell under the spell of Saint-Simon's Utopian theories of an ideal future society. He was for several years secretary to the famous visionary, and for a time regarded himself as his adopted son. His, however, was too practical a nature to remain long in the clouds, and in 1817 he broke away from his master, though not before the latter had inspired him with that ardent love of the people which was to underlie all his historical work. Thierry then threw himself into political journalism, and the articles he wrote between 1817 and 1821, later included in the volumes entitled *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France* (1827) and *Dix Ans d'Etudes Historiques* (1834), already reveal his taste for the picturesque, his sympathy with the masses, and the reliance on original sources which distinguished his later work. Henceforward he devoted himself entirely to historical study, the firstfruits of which

was his *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre*

*Histoire de la  
Conquête de  
l'Angleterre*  
(1825)

(1825). The long hours spent poring over manuscripts in ill-lighted libraries cost Thierry his eyesight. In 1826 he was obliged to engage secretaries, and in 1830 he became totally blind. Nothing daunted, he continued his tremendous labours, justifying Chateaubriand's homage to his admired disciple, "l'his-

toire aura son Homère comme la poésie." Six of the seven

*Récits des  
Temps  
Mérovingiens*  
(1840)

*Récits des Temps Mérovingiens* published in book-form in 1840 had already appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* between 1833 and 1837 under the title *Nouvelles Lettres sur l'Histoire de France*.

This work, which by many is regarded as his finest production, "unlocked the Merovingian age." It is a vivid picture of Gallo-Roman civilization struggling against Frankish barbarism, and is based on some of the most characteristic stories of Gregory of Tours. When the *Récits* were collected in book-form, Thierry prefixed to them a long essay entitled *Considérations sur l'Histoire de France*, in which he summarizes and formulates his favourite historical theories.

In 1836 Thierry was invited by Guizot to edit a series of documents bearing on the growth of the Communes, and hence on the history of the Third Estate, which he had always regarded as the most important class in the making of history. He threw himself heart and soul into the work, for which he wrote a long introduction, bearing the title *Essai sur l'Histoire de la Formation et des Progrès du Tiers-Etat*, and published separately in 1853.

Thierry came to history from politics in search of proofs and arguments in support of his liberal views. This explains both his choice of subjects and his method of treating them. He finds the key to history in the conflict of races, that is to say, in the struggles between a conquering and a conquered nation—the Franks and the Gallo-Romans in his own country, the Normans and the Saxons in England—and believes that these conflicts are continued in the struggle between the middle class and the aristocracy.

"Nous sommes les fils des hommes du tiers-état; le tiers-état sortait des Communes, les Communes furent l'asile des serfs, les serfs étaient les vaincus de la Conquête."<sup>1</sup>

In his view it was not the ruling classes but the people who, until the seventeenth century, made France what it was and thus prepared the way for modern democracy.

<sup>1</sup> *Dix Ans d'Etudes Historiques* (1834).



"L'histoire de France, telle que nous l'ont faite les historiens modernes, n'est point la vraie histoire du pays. . . . La meilleure partie de nos annales, la plus grave, la plus instructive, reste à écrire : il nous manque l'histoire des citoyens, l'histoire des sujets, l'histoire du peuple."

Of such a history Thierry's own work constitutes isolated fragments—but it was Michelet who was to paint a vast historical fresco of the people, the great anonymous crowd processing through the centuries of French history.

Thierry has been reproached with the rigidity of his dominant theory of the conflict of races, but it does not mar his work overmuch, for he never loses himself in generalizations, being intent on filling his pages with concrete and coloured detail, so that his readers may learn both what he has learnt from charters and chronicles and what he has divined by his historical imagination. Already in 1820 he wrote :

"J'avais l'ambition de faire de l'art en même temps que de la science, d'être dramatique à l'aide de matériaux fournis par une érudition sincère et scrupuleuse."

Thierry's style is sober, moving, dramatic, or picturesque, according to the needs of his narrative, and always simplicity itself. Though he is not the greatest historian of his age, either in thought, manner, or method, he has the great merit of being an initiator and a pioneer, or, as he himself puts it, "celui qui a planté le drapeau de la réforme historique."

The philosophical and political school of historians aimed rather at discovering causes and effects, dissecting and explaining the structure of society, and tracing the evolution of forms of government, than at narrating, painting, or dramatizing their past history. In a word, they endeavoured to apply to history the methods of science.

François Guizot (1787-1874) was born at Nîmes, and educated at Geneva. At the age of twenty-four he was appointed assistant to Lacretelle, Professor of History at the Sorbonne. After the fall of the Empire he successively occupied various high administrative posts under the Restoration Monarchy, and

## II. THE PHILOSOPHI- CAL AND POLITICAL SCHOOL

Guizot  
(1787-1874)



was throughout an upholder of moderate liberalism. In 1820 he returned to his chair at the Sorbonne to deliver courses of lectures on the origin of representative government and on the institutions of France, part of which was later embodied in his *Essais sur l'Histoire de France* (1823). As Guizot used lectures for purposes of political propaganda, the Government suspended the course in 1822, and he did not resume it until 1828. The intervening six years were spent working at his *Histoire de la Révolution d'Angleterre*, of which the first part appeared in 1826 and the second and third in 1854 and 1856. His two masterpieces, *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe* and *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, consist of lectures delivered at the Sorbonne between 1828 and 1830. Unfortunately, the second does not go beyond the fourteenth century, for Guizot's course was brought to an abrupt end by the revolution of July, which plunged him once more into politics, this time for good. For the next eighteen years, instead of writing history, he helped to make it. Under Louis Philippe he held successively the offices of Home Secretary, Minister of Education, and Minister for Foreign Affairs. With Guizot's work as a statesman we have no concern here, but it is worth remarking that he never lost interest in historical studies, and, in the words of Thierry, did all in his power to make history "a national institution." It was he who was the prime mover in the formation of the Société de l'Histoire de France, which has done such valuable work in re-editing chronicles and publishing manuscript material; he, again, who proposed that valuable historical documents should be published at the expense of the State. The resulting series of *Documents Inédits* has proved of untold value to students of history. After the fall of the monarchy in 1848, Guizot took refuge in America for a time, and spent the rest of his life completing his *Histoire de la Révolution d'Angleterre*, writing the *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de mon Temps* (1858-1868) and the charming *Histoire de France racontée à mes petits-enfants* (1870-1873).

Guizot was the first French historian to dissect the body social and politic, as an anatomist dissects a human body, and to analyse all its functions. He formulated the historical law of mutual dependence by showing the reciprocal influence of the individual on society and of society on the individual. He studied facts and events with the minutest care, but was interested in them only as the outward and visible signs of ideas. Thus when he came to write down his conclusions, he left out the details which had helped him to form them, for, as he justly remarks :

“Quand on veut arriver, sur le caractère d'une époque, à des conclusions générales, et faire connaître à d'autres que des érudits le développement progressif d'une société et de son gouvernement, il faut supprimer une bonne part de cet échafaudage.”—*Essais sur l'Histoire de France*.

Only such historical events and facts as have had an influence on succeeding generations owing to the force of the ideas lying behind them are worthy of interest.

“Il y a deux passés. L'un tout à fait mort, sans intérêt réel parce que son influence ne s'est pas étendue au delà de sa durée ; l'autre durant toujours par l'empire qu'il a exercé sur les siècles suivants. . . . L'histoire nous offre à toutes ses époques quelques idées dominantes, quelques grands événements qui ont déterminé le sort et le caractère d'une longue suite de générations.”—*Hist. de la Civ. en Europe*.

Guizot had no interest in the individual and the particular, he was completely lacking in pictorial and dramatic imagination, but he was an admirable investigator of facts, their causes and effects and their relation one to another. All these are woven into such a systematic and symmetrical pattern that one sympathizes with Sainte-Beuve when he says that Guizot's history is too logical to be true. But these were but the defects of his qualities. Taine says of Guizot's style that it possesses “une solidité majestueuse.” It has an austerity and a gravity which are not without charm, but it is also sometimes stiff and heavy. When all

is said, however, the fact remains that Guizot was not only a great and good man, but the greatest French historian quâ historian of the first half of the nineteenth century.

François Mignet (1796-1884), however, runs him very close. The son of a locksmith who wholeheartedly believed in the principles of the French Revolution, Mignet was brought up in an atmosphere of liberal ideas. After a brilliant career at the Lycée of Avignon, he returned to his native town to study law. Here he became intimate with Thiers, a law student from Marseilles, who shared his ideas and ambitions. In 1821 the two young Provençals came to Paris and threw themselves heart and soul into political journalism. But Mignet, who had already discovered his real vocation while writing a prize-essay on the Institutions of Saint-Louis, did not allow himself to be entirely monopolized by journalism. Between 1822 and 1824 he gave two courses of public lectures at the Athénée—one on the sixteenth century and the Reformation, and another, prior to Guizot's, on the English Revolution. In 1824 appeared his *Histoire de la Révolution française*, an extraordinarily lucid two-volume survey, in which the Revolution was for the first time revealed as an organic whole.

*Histoire de la  
Révolution  
française  
(1824)*

Mignet showed that it was no mere accidental upheaval, but the logical outcome of two centuries of French history and the inaugurator of a new era. "Lorsqu' une réforme est devenue nécessaire, et que le moment de l'accomplir est venu, rien ne l'empêche et tout la sert."

Charged by Guizot with the task of editing the unpublished documents relating to the Spanish Succession, Mignet produced four volumes of *Negociations*, preceded by an introductory essay entitled *Introduction à l'Histoire de la Succession d'Espagne*, which is not only a masterpiece of diplomatic history, but threw new light on the diplomacy of Mazarin and Louis XIV, and brilliantly distinguishes and characterizes the different periods of the reign of the Grand Monarch.

Mignet's later work consists of a series of monographs dealing almost exclusively with the sixteenth century : *Antonio Perez et Philippe II* (1845), *Marie Stuart* (1851), *Charles Quint, son abdication, son séjour et sa mort au monastère de St. Just* (1852-1854), and *La Rivalité de François I et de Charles Quint* (1875). All these were fragments of a great work which he planned to write on the Reformation.

His mono-  
graphs on the  
sixteenth  
century

In 1837 Mignet was appointed Perpetual Secretary to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, and the *Eloges*. it was one of his duties to write when any of its members died, are models of style and appreciation.

As an historian Mignet was no more interested in events for their own sake than Guizot, though he writes his works in narrative form, instead of merely giving his conclusions, because he sees in history "une science féconde en enseignements, le drame et la leçon de la vie humaine." He thus chooses by preference subjects with strong dramatic possibilities and lets events tell their own tale, though he never hesitates to supplement it with his own judgments and reflections. He believed, though he later somewhat modified this fatalistic theory, that "ce sont moins les hommes qui ont mené les choses que les choses qui ont mené les hommes." The sixteenth century, which he made his special province, was the most dramatic period in modern history before the Revolution, for what more dramatic spectacle than that of the combination of European powers involved in the War of the Spanish Succession?—Spain in full decadence, France beginning to slip from the summit of her glory, and England just emerging from her revolution. Yet Mignet does not treat his materials as a Michelet would have done : he condenses facts, scenes, and events, and he engraves, but does not paint, portraits of the great men of history.

In spite of his harmoniously balanced periods, Mignet's style is lucid, sober, firm, and forcible. He makes much use of antithesis, but none of metaphors or images. His powers of condensation and concentration are remarkable.



It would be hard to find another writer who said so much in so few words.

Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), the lifelong friend of Mignet, began to write history with a frankly political aim. His *Histoire de la Révolution française* (10 vols., 1823-1827) was written to prove that the Revolution had been a necessity, that the principles it laid down were unchallengeable, but that they could only be carried into effect by the expulsion of the old dynasty and by setting up a constitutional monarchy in its stead. While Mignet's history of the Revolution was a generalization based upon specific facts, Thiers' is a detailed narrative of events, which leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions.

After 1830 Thiers held various ministerial posts under Louis Philippe, whom he had done much to help to the throne. In the intervals of his work as orator and minister of State he found time to prepare his *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* (20 vols., 1845-1862), which begins where his first work had ended, and which, though unintentionally on its author's part, did not a little towards the revival of the Napoleonic cult, and so in a sense prepared the way for the *coup d'état* of the third Napoleon. For Thiers, though a liberal in politics and an upholder of the Revolution, saw in Napoleon the man who stepped in at the right moment to save his country from anarchy and ruin, and hence had nothing but admiration for him. "Il nous a donné la gloire, qui est la grandeur morale et qui ramène avec le temps la grandeur matérielle. Il était par son génie fait pour la France comme la France était faite pour lui." After the Revolution of 1848, Thiers disappeared from public life, and only re-entered it again in 1863 to become the chief anti-Imperialist orator in the French Chamber. The part played by Thiers during the Franco-Prussian War and his work as President of the Third French Republic (1871-1873), which he had been instrumental in founding, are familiar to all students of history.



Thiers was undoubtedly more gifted as a statesman than as an historian, or as a man of letters. On the other hand, his experience as a practical politician was very valuable to him in writing his *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*. Such matters as finance, administration, diplomacy, etc., which had hitherto received scant attention from historians, are here given their due prominence. He had a great taste for detail, and a perfect mastery of it, though it is not the coloured moving detail of Thierry or Barante. He is as diffuse as Mignet is condensed. Unlike Guizot, he has no appreciation of the influence of moral forces on historical events; indeed, one of his critics has gone so far as to describe his histories as "the epic of matter." Facts plain and unadorned, and plenty of them, these for him are the materials of history for "de toutes les productions de l'esprit, la plus pure, la plus chaste, la plus sévère, la plus haute et la plus humble à la fois, c'est l'histoire." <sup>1</sup> These naked facts have to be clothed in language, it is true, but "cette muse fière, clairvoyante et modeste, a besoin surtout d'être vêtue sans apprêts." <sup>2</sup> And Thiers carried out his precept, for his own style, sober, alert, and rapid, has no purple patches and adds no glamour to his lucid presentation of events.

To the philosophical and political school of historians belongs also Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), who applied Guizot's analytical method to the study of the rise and growth of modern democracy. He made his name by two books—*De la Démocratie en Amérique* (1836-1839), in which he studies the progress and future of democracy in the New World; and *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1856), a brilliant attempt to disentangle the true historical significance of the French Revolution, and to show that it was a logical continuation of the work of the *ancien régime*.

"Elle a pris, il est vrai, le monde à l'improviste, et cependant elle n'était que le complément du plus long travail, la terminaison

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

soudaine et violente d'une œuvre à laquelle dix générations d'hommes avaient travaillé."

Tocqueville further goes on to show that the Revolution did not bring about that complete rupture with the past, the object which it set itself and which his contemporaries believed it had achieved, but on the contrary that in many ways it only accelerated certain tendencies of the *ancien régime*. Tocqueville was the first to judge the greatest event in modern history in an impartial spirit, and two great historical writers of a later date, Taine and Sorel, paid great tribute to his judgment in adopting his main thesis as to its causes and results.

Thierry, Guizot, Mignet, Thiers, and Tocqueville were historians of varying ability and literary gift. We now come to a poetic genius who chose history for his subject, Michelet, "ce prodigieux historien du rêve, ce grand somnambule du passé,"<sup>1</sup> the greatest literary artist who ever devoted himself to the history of France.

Jules Michelet (1798-1874) was born in poverty. His father was a small printer, and the son as a child helped in the actual working of the press, where he spent his days, as he himself later described it, "comme une herbe sans soleil entre deux pavés de Paris."

Michelet (1798-1874) When he was fourteen years of age, by making great sacrifices, his parents were able to send him to the Lycée Charlemagne, where Villemain was one of his teachers, and where in 1816 he carried off nearly all the prizes. Instead of proceeding to the Ecole Normale, he determined to become self-supporting at once, and took a humble post as schoolmaster. In his spare time he continued his studies, and by 1821 had taken all the degrees necessary to qualify him for a college or university professorship in history. He immediately obtained a post at the Collège Sainte-Barbe-Rollin, and was shortly afterwards persuaded by Victor Cousin both to learn German and to translate Vico's *Scienza Nuova* (1730), which, as we shall see, was to have an important influence on his

<sup>1</sup> *Journal des Goncourt*, vol. ii, p. 165.

philosophy of history. Hitherto Vico had been scarcely known outside Italy, and little appreciated there, owing to his involved and difficult style. Michelet's fine translation, which appeared in 1827, made Vico's book known not only to France, but to Europe. In the same year he was appointed *maître de conférences* in history and philosophy at the Ecole Normale, and published his first historical work,

*Précis de  
l'Histoire  
Moderne*  
(1827)

the *Précis de l'Histoire Moderne*, a brilliant textbook, based largely on original sources, and containing a survey of civilization from the fifteenth century to the Revolution. A year

later he paid a visit to Germany, and just before he started made the acquaintance of Edgar Quinet, who joined him in Heidelberg and became his lifelong friend. Michelet returned to France filled with an undying enthusiasm for German philosophy and scholarship. Inspired by Niebuhr, whom he had met at Heidelberg, he planned to write a history of the Roman Republic, and in 1830 visited Italy to collect material for his work. His *Histoire Romaine*, which appeared the following year, popularized some of Niebuhr's favourite hypotheses, and also contains indications of Michelet's own philosophy of history. In this same year he was appointed chief of the historical section of the National

*Introduction à  
l'Histoire  
Universelle*  
(1831)

Archives, and published his first famous and entirely characteristic book, the *Introduction à l'Histoire Universelle*, which has been summed up as "a hymn to the glories of France as the

principal actor in the drama of liberty." <sup>1</sup> In 1833 he was given a deputy-professorship under Guizot at the Sorbonne, and embarked upon the first volume of his chief and monu-

*Histoire de  
France*  
(first 6 vols.)  
(1833-1844)

mental work, the *Histoire de France*, which, when its twenty-seventh and last volume was completed, just before the author's death, gave a complete picture of the destinies of France from

the earliest times to the battle of Waterloo. In 1838 Michelet left the Ecole Normale for the Collège de France,

<sup>1</sup> Gooch: *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century*.

where, like Quinet and Mickiewicz, he used his professorial chair as a pulpit from which to propound democratic and humanitarian theories of a visionary kind. The subject-matter of these lectures is embodied in three books written at this period—*Les Jésuites* (1843), *Le Prêtre, la Femme, et la Famille* (1845), and *Le Peuple* (1846). It was his hatred of kings and priests, his belief in the people, his love for the poor and the oppressed, that explain why Michelet, when in 1844 he had completed his survey of medieval France and stood on the threshold of modern history, suddenly broke off his narrative to study the French Revolution. In his own poetical way he tells how one day, while paying an admiring visit to the cathedral of Rheims, where the French kings received their consecration, he noticed high up on one of the towers a curious group of sculptured figures—

“une guirlande de suppliciés. Tel a la corde au cou, tel a perdu, l'oreille. . . . Quoi! l'église des fêtes, cette mariée, pour collier de noces a pris ce lugubre ornement! Ce pilori du peuple est placé au-dessus de l'autel. Mais ses pleurs n'ont-ils pu, à travers les voûtes, tomber sur la tête des rois. Onction redoutable de la Révolution, de la colère de Dieu!”

And the thought flashed through him: “Je ne comprendrai pas les siècles monarchiques, si d'abord avant tout, je n'établis en moi l'âme et la foi du peuple.”

*Histoire de la  
Révolution  
française  
(1847-1853)*

The seven volumes of Michelet's *Histoire de la Révolution française* appeared between 1847 and 1853. Two years before its completion, he had been deprived of his university chair and of his post at the National Archives for refusing to take the oaths of allegiance to the Empire.

Michelet retired into the country and resumed his *Histoire de France* at the point where he had left it in 1844. The volumes on the Renaissance and the Reformation appeared in 1855, and the remaining nine, bringing the narrative up to the Revolution, between 1856 and 1867. While engaged on the completion of this monumental work, Michelet found

*Histoire de  
France  
(from the  
Renaissance  
to the  
Revolution),  
11 vols.  
(1855-1867)*



time to write a number of warm appeals in favour of oppressed nations—*Pologne et Russie* (1851); *Principautés Danubiennes* (1853); *Légendes démocratiques du Nord* (1854), which includes an account of one of Mickiewicz's lectures; and *La Pologne Martyre* (1863). During the same period appeared a curious little crop of books on natural history, a subject in which his second wife is believed to have interested him. *L'Oiseau* (1856), *L'Insecte* (1857), *La Mer* (1861), and *La Montagne* (1868) reveal an interest in nature which is neither the scientific interest of a Buffon nor the moral interest of a La Fontaine, nor yet the mere æsthetic delight of a romantic poet, but is more akin to the mystical sense of brotherhood between man and all nature, animate, inanimate, or elemental, of a St. Francis.

During the last few years of his life Michelet began to write a history of the nineteenth century, but he did not live to complete more than three volumes of it, and they fall far below the level of the rest of his work.

Michelet was the only great historian of his age who was of the people and not of the bourgeoisie, the only one, too, who was not primarily led to history through an interest in politics, but because it appealed to his imagination. Later, it is true, he was swept along in the democratic movement of the day, and used history as a vehicle for his half-political, half-mystical views, but, unlike most of his brother historians, he never entered public life or became a practical politician. Though only a year or two younger than Thierry, Thiers, and Mignet, his earliest works are later in date than theirs. He was a great admirer of Guizot, his senior by eleven years, and also of Thierry, but to him their respective methods seemed one-sided, and he would fain combine them. "Augustin Thierry," he remarks, "avait appelé l'histoire *narration*; Guizot, *analyse*; moi je l'appelle *résurrection*." And again in his *Preface* of 1869:

*Histoire du  
xix<sup>e</sup> Siècle*

Michelet's  
conception  
of history as  
"une résurrec-  
tion intégrale  
de la vie"



"Elle (la France) avait des annales et non point une histoire. Des hommes éminents l'avaient étudiée surtout au point de vue politique. Nul n'avait pénétré dans l'infini détail des développements divers de son activité (religieuse, économique, artistique, etc. . . .). Nul ne l'avait encore embrassée du regard dans l'unité vivante des éléments naturels et géographiques qui l'ont constituée. Le premier, je le vis comme une âme et comme une personne."

France was indeed to Michelet a living creature with a soul peculiarly her own, and for him her past was no more dead than her present. To feel this we have only to read his history, but his account of his first visit to the National Archives is a good example of his attitude and of the way he handled even documents as if they were things of flesh and blood :

"Je ne tardai pas à m'apercevoir, dans le silence de ces galeries, qu'il y avait un mouvement, un murmure qui n'était pas la mort. Ces papiers, ces parchemins, laissés là depuis longtemps, ne demandaient pas mieux que de revenir au jour. Ces papiers ne sont pas des papiers, mais des vies d'hommes, de provinces, de peuples. . . . Et à mesure que je soufflais sur la poussière, je les voyais se soulever. Ils tiraient du sépulcre qui la main, qui la tête comme dans le jugement dernier de Michel-Ange, ou dans la danse des morts. Cette danse galvanique qu'ils menaient, autour de moi, j'ai essayé de la reproduire dans ce livre."<sup>1</sup>

Michelet's conception of history as "une résurrection intégrale de la vie" never varied. As for his philosophy of history, he learnt it from the two men who are regarded as the founders of that science, the Italian Vico and the German Herder. From the *Scienza Nuova* (1730) Michelet learnt, among other things, that documents, however fragmentary, are the most reliable sources of information about the past, that the historian must divest himself of his modern standpoint before he attempts to interpret bygone ages, that the masses have contributed enormously to civilization, that their

His philosophy  
of history

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de France*, Bk. IV, *Eclaircissement*.

social conditions are reflected in law and poetry, and that great men are but symbols of their time. From the *Idcen zur Philosophie der Geschichte* (1784-1791), translated by Edgar Quinet, he learnt to appreciate the extraordinary importance of the geographical factor in history. His study of Vico and Herder was further supplemented by Victor Cousin's *Cours d'Histoire de la Philosophie*, which he attended in 1828, and in which the dominant ideas of Vico and Herder were analysed and explained.

Guided by these ideas, gifted with an extraordinarily sympathetic imagination, and inspired by a love of France and of the people that knew no bounds, Michelet wrote the history of his country on the grand scale of an epic. Much learning went to the making of it, but even more feeling and imagination, for though Michelet's emotions were quickened by ideas, his ideas easily resolved themselves into emotions, and, as Jules Simon remarks, "il devine plus qu'il ne constate, mais comme la plupart des grands poètes il devine juste." It is this combination of sympathy and imagination which enables Michelet to become himself an actor in the great drama of history. He hopes and fears, suffers and rejoices, with his ancestors. He becomes a man of their time, and in his wonderful picture of France at the end of the fourteenth century (to take one example from many) makes us see or feel with him and them "la grande pitié du royaume de France." Not only do the dead rise from their graves, but the soul of France becomes incarnate at his touch, once in her greatest heroine, Joan of Arc, and once again in what Michelet regarded as her most national and ideal movement—the Revolution. Her past history is to him a living thing, of which in the *Preface* of 1869 he takes a tender farewell:

"France avec qui j'ai vécu ! que je quitte à si grand regret ! Dans quelle communauté j'ai passé avec toi quarante années (dix siècles !). . . . Je travaillais pour toi, j'allais, venais, cherchais, écrivais ! Je donnais chaque jour de moi-même tout, peut-être encore plus. Le lendemain matin te trouvant, à ma table, je me

trouvais le même, fort de ta vie puissante et de ta jeunesse éternelle. . . .

"Eh bien ! ma grande France, s'il a fallu, pour retrouver ta vie qu'un homme se donnât, passât et repassât tant de fois le fleuve des morts, il s'en console, te remercie encore. Et son plus grand chagrin, c'est qu'il faut te quitter ici."

Michelet's love of France is to be found on every page of his history. Even her geography is treated with loving care and made living and dramatic in that wonderful *Tableau de la France*, with which the second volume opens, and in which her provinces and principal towns are so admirably and poetically characterized.

His love of  
France

As for Michelet's love of the people, it grew, as we have seen, as he proceeded, until in the end it became a blind adoration. "C'est vous qui aurez porté la démocratie dans l'histoire," writes Quinet in a letter to Michelet dated November 11, 1863, "et cette révolution que vous avez faite est peut-être la seule qui n'aura pas de réaction." The theme of the welfare of the masses and of their gradual emancipation forms the unifying thread, one might almost say the plot, of his romantic history. For if subjectivity and lyrical exaltation spell Romanticism, Michelet was indeed a Romantic.

His love of  
the people

The first six volumes of the *Histoire de France* are the most enduring and perfect portion of his work ; the volumes on the Revolution, though full of inaccuracies and exaggerations, contain a picture of that upheaval which vies with Carlyle's for brilliancy, and the description of the *Fête de la Fédération* ranks with *Jeanne d'Arc* and the *Tableau de la France*. Of the intervening volumes, those on the Renaissance and the Reform are the best, the others being marred by Michelet's hatred of priests and kings, by his belief that the people can do no wrong, and by digressions on his favourite themes of patriotism, democracy, and liberty. But even at his worst Michelet is "a magnificent illustrator of the book of history," and to the whole work one might apply the remark

Estimate of his  
*Histoire de  
France* as a  
whole

he himself made about his *Jeanne d'Arc*: "D'autres raconteront encore la vie de cette sainte, mais personne ne fera plus pour elle ce que j'ai fait."

From Michelet's name is inseparable that of Edgar Quinet (1803-1875), for the two men were united by fifty years of close and unwavering friendship. Vico and Herder were their joint masters in the philosophy of history. Both were ardent apostles of the doctrine of democracy; both had deep sympathies with all oppressed and struggling nations; and both fulminated from their professorial chairs at the Collège de France against the Roman Catholic Church of modern times in general and against the Jesuits in particular. Yet their differences of outlook were profound.

Quinet's *Génie des Religions* (1842), *Le Christianisme et la Révolution française* (1845), *Les Révolutions d'Italie* (1848-1852), *La Révolution religieuse du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (1860), and his most famous historical work, *La Révolution* (1865), reveal a follower of the school of Thiers, i.e. a student of cause and effect. Notwithstanding his somewhat obscure symbolism and his frequent excursions into the realms of prophecy, Quinet's method is philosophical and critical. Of all the historians of his age he was the most profound believer in religion as the shaper of historical events; in fact, his philosophy of history is Bossuet's doctrine of Providence rebaptized and clothed in a more scientific dress, i.e. the influence on history of man's idea of God rather than the direct influence of God Himself. His *History of the Revolution* develops the original thesis that the Revolution was a failure because the men who made it were not true to its spirit.

"Il veut la liberté, du moins il croit la vouloir. Mais l'idée qu'il s'en fait a été formée sous le despotisme de l'ancien régime. Elle est pleine encore du génie intraitable du passé. . . . Mais qui veut vivre libre doit regarder ailleurs. La liberté n'est à aucune époque de notre passé. Ne la cherchez pas en arrière."

Quinet regards the failure of the Revolution as complete on the religious side, the only one in which, according to



him, it was essential to succeed. The revolutionaries should have destroyed the old religion of France, root and branch, and created a new one. They did neither. The religion that Quinet would fain have seen established was Protestantism, which, unlike Catholicism, seemed to him compatible with modern principles. By his emphatic affirmation that no nation can prosper without a religion adapted to its needs, Quinet was one of the most important representatives of the spiritual revival of the early nineteenth century. Like Michelet, he wrote much besides history—mostly imaginative works of a mystical and symbolical character: *Ahasuéus* (1833), a kind of vast allegorical mystery-play on the wandering Jew, who personifies the human mind progressing through the ages; *Prométhée* (1838), an epic poem, in which the Titan symbolizes the martyrdom and redemption of humanity; *Les Esclaves* (1853), a dramatic poem in five acts on the eternal tragedy of slavery, of which the French were still performing the last act; and *Merlin l'Enchanteur* (1860), on which Quinet had been working and meditating for many years. One of his last works, *La Création* (1870), an attempt to apply the method of natural science to history and to explain political laws by the laws of nature, reveals a Quinet who is no longer the disciple of Vico and Herder, but of Lamarck, Herbert Spencer, and Darwin. Thus, as Faguet points out:

“Edgar Quinet . . . a accompli une sorte d'évolution à travers les idées du siècle, subissant successivement diverses influences, celle de l'Allemagne, celle de l'Université anti-cléricale de 1870, celle de Darwin et du transformisme, traduisant à chaque fois, et agrandissant, élargissant . . . les idées qu'il recevait ainsi de la région du monde qu'il traversait.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Politiques et Moralistes*, ii.



## CHAPTER VIII

### LITERARY CRITICISM DURING THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

CLOSELY connected with the progress of historical studies during this period is the renewal and development of literary criticism. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries literary critics were for the most part not professionals, but great writers who had distinguished themselves in other branches of literature and wished to set forth their æsthetic theories, and incidentally to judge their predecessors and contemporaries. Their criticism was purely dogmatic—that is to say, they judged every work of art by reference to a definite standard of taste and by conformity to a canon of rules. If a poem, a drama, etc., fulfilled this preconceived ideal, it received nothing but praise; if they departed from it, condemnation was their portion.

Literary criticism in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

During the Romantic Movement the dislike of rule, the extraordinary development of the novel which had never had any rules, the interest taken in the literature of other countries and of other ages with varying standards of taste, led to a new kind of criticism, which consisted in an understanding and judicial enjoyment of literature, and which tended more and more to explain literary works by the political, social, and moral environment in which they were produced. At the same time, the spheres of critic and artist tended less

New features introduced during the romantic period

and less to overlap, to the advantage of criticism, for the artist is rarely the best judge of either his own or other people's productions. This does not mean that writers did not expound their æsthetic theories in prefaces and manifestos. Frenchmen of all ages have done that, and are likely to continue to do so, because principles mean so much to them; but as a rule they left literary judgment and appreciation to the professional critic or university professor. If the new relative and impressionist criticism can be said to have had any single founder, it was Madame de Staël, who in *De la Littérature* and *De l'Allemagne* tried to prove, both by precept and example, that there is no such thing as an absolute standard of taste, and that literature is an expression of society.

With the important exception of Sainte-Beuve, the three best French critics of the first half of the nineteenth century were university professors, and all four held very different views as to the function of literary history and criticism.

Abel François Villemain (1790-1867) was successively Professor at the Lycée Charlemagne, the Ecole Normale, and the Sorbonne. In the university lectures he delivered between 1816 and 1828, he gave to French students for the first time a comprehensive survey of their own literature, a historical view of its origins, and of its debt to other nations. Incidentally, he also attempted to give something approaching a comparative account of the literatures of England, Italy, and Spain, and always endeavoured to show the relation that exists between the literature of any given period and the general movement of ideas which precedes or accompanies it. This was a large undertaking, especially at a time when most of the ground was unexplored, and it cannot be said that Villemain carried it out brilliantly. Of the numerous courses he delivered on French literature, he published only two: *Tableau de la Littérature française au Moyen Âge* and *Tableau de la Littérature française au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, wisely choosing the two periods best suited to the

Villemain  
(1790-1867)

application of his method of dealing with literary history. Though somewhat superficial and lacking in grasp, these six volumes are interesting to read, and entitle their author to a prominent place among the pioneers of modern literary criticism.

Villemain's most distinguished pupil, though not altogether a follower of his method, Saint-Marc Girardin (1801-1873), Professor of French Poetry at the Sorbonne from 1833 to 1863, occupied himself mainly with the psychological and moral aspects of literature. In his *Cours de Littérature dramatique*, published in 1843, he discusses types of parental love, of jealousy and other emotions in ancient and modern drama, and, unlike Villemain, who always left his contemporaries alone, made these studies an occasion for attacking the young romantic school. This was comparative literature, no doubt, but comparative literature of an inferior kind. In his course on *La Fontaine et les Fabulistes*, a critical study of the various transformations undergone by the fable from Æsop to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Saint-Marc Girardin is the first to trace the evolution of a literary kind.

Désiré Nisard (1806-1888), Professor of Latin Eloquence at the Collège de France, and later of French Eloquence at the Sorbonne, is a critic of the old doctrinaire school, but one of the very best of the kind. His *Histoire de la Littérature française* (vols. i-iii, 1844-1849; vol. iv, 1861) is a work of reasoned criticism based on an *à priori* theory of the French literary genius, a work in which the connection between literature and history is ignored, and in which biographies and temperaments have no place. At the end of the last volume, Nisard went to the trouble of defining his method, or rather his system:

“Elle (cette critique) s'est fait un idéal de l'esprit humain dans les livres; elle s'en est fait un du génie particulier de la France, un autre de sa langue; elle met chaque auteur et chaque livre en

regard de ce triple idéal. Elle note ce qui s'en rapproche : voilà le bon ; ce qui s'en éloigne ; voilà le mauvais."

In Nisard's view, this ideal is the expression of general truths in perfect language. Hence his gods are the great writers of the classical school, who so admirably realized this ideal. And he admits no other. He regards the literature of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the early seventeenth century as toiling slowly, and with many backward slips, up the slope leading to the tableland of the Great Age ; he sees the literature of the Age of Enlightenment descending rapidly from the summit, and romantic literature precipitating itself to the very foot of this symbolical mountain. Literary dogmatism can no further go. Yet Nisard's chapters on the age of Louis XIV will always be worth reading, for no one has treated its literature with more enlightened appreciation and enthusiasm, and no one has made a fuller or more suggestive analysis of the classical spirit. For this much must be forgiven him. The whole work is an attack on the theory and practice of the romantics, but as the enemy had already won the battle, it was a waste of powder and shot, except in so far as it definitely rehabilitated the great classical writers as masters in their own line.

While Nisard was making his gallant attempts to make criticism retread the straight and narrow way of dogmatism, to combat the idea that there is no disputing about tastes, his slightly elder contemporary, Sainte-Beuve, was leading it along a very different path, winding uphill and down dale through the lands of literature. Along this road the greatest French critic pursued his tranquil way, examining, explaining, and appreciating all he saw with reference to its surroundings, and in a spirit of scientific impartiality, which at the same time left place for an expression of his personal tastes.

Charles Augustin de Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), after receiving a good education at the Lycée Charlemagne, without much ardour took up the study of medicine, and



though he soon abandoned it, he doubtless owed to his early medical studies the taste for scientific method which was later to characterize his work as a literary critic. In 1824 one of his former masters at the Lycée Charlemagne founded a newspaper, *Le Globe*, and persuaded Sainte-Beuve to join its staff. In literary and miscellaneous articles for this paper, he served his apprenticeship as a writer, and discovered his critical vocation. His review of the *Odes et Ballades* (January, 1827) brought him into personal relations with Victor Hugo, who admitted him to the Cénacle. For the next eight or nine years he remained in close connection with the romantic school, his longest adherence to any movement, for, being of a very impressionable nature, he sojourned for a time in all the literary, philosophical, and humanitarian groups of his age, coming successively under the influence of Victor Hugo, Lamennais, and the Saint-Simonians; but he was of too sceptical and detached a nature to be held very long by any of them. "Il vient, s'enquiert et s'en va."

It was as a recruit to romanticism that Sainte-Beuve published in 1828 his *Tableau de la Poésie française au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, a landmark in French literary history, for it awakened an interest in the Pleiad, stimulated the new departures in prosody, and endeavoured to legitimize the romantic movement by showing that it was a direct descendant of Ronsard and his school. The opponents of romanticism made great capital out of the assumption that the individualistic tendency was not in the national tradition, and that it was contrary to the French genius; the upholders of romanticism were eager to prove that this was not the case. Villemain, without polemical intention, in his *Tableau du Moyen-Age*, Sainte-Beuve in his *Tableau de la Poésie française au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, and Théophile Gautier in *Les Grottesques* (1833), the two latter of a set purpose, showed that the literature of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the early part of the seventeenth century respectively, while clearly national, had a marked individualistic tendency. After three ven-

*Tableau de la  
Poésie française  
au XV<sup>e</sup> Siècle  
(1828)*



tures as a poet—*Vie, Poésies et Pensées de Joseph Delorme* (1829), *Les Consolations* (1830), *Les Pensées d'Août* (1837)—and one as a novelist—*Volupté* (1834)—all four written whilst their author was passing through an intellectual and moral crisis, and all four confessions of the typically romantic kind, Sainte-Beuve suddenly abandoned creative literature, allowed criticism to absorb all his energies, gradually lost sympathy with romanticism, and finally ceased to be its official critic.

Meanwhile he was contributing industriously to the *National*, the *Revue de Paris*, and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and these articles, revised and republished, form the content of his earliest collection of essays, the *Critiques et Portraits littéraires* (5 vols., 1832–1839), in 1844 rearranged and reissued under the titles *Portraits littéraires* (3 vols.) and *Portraits de Femmes* (1 vol.), and of the *Portraits Contemporains* (5 vols., 1846). In all these essays Sainte-Beuve combines criticism with an account, not unmingled with gossip, of the life and personality of the writer under discussion. He has not yet gained a full mastery of his method—the history and personality are apt to swamp the criticism; but even in these three early collections, Sainte-Beuve reveals critical powers far above those of his predecessors or contemporaries, and that charm of manner which is one of his most delightful characteristics. Moreover, we can trace in these essays a steady increase in range and value. During the academic year of 1837–1838, Sainte-Beuve was invited to give a course of lectures at the University of Lausanne. His subject was Jansenism and the Jansenists, and these lectures were the starting-point of his great work, the *Histoire de Port-Royal*, which was to occupy him at intervals for nearly twenty years. After the Revolution of 1848, he accepted an invitation from the Belgian Government to give a course of lectures on French literature at Liège, and this course developed into another work on a large scale, *Chateaubriand et son Groupe littéraire*, published in 1860. Both of these books, however, belong

His *Portraits*  
(1844–1846)

to Sainte-Beuve's later and mature period, which coincides both in time and spirit with the literature of the following age. There we shall presently meet him again and discuss his critical work as a whole.



BOOK III

NEO-ROMANTICISM

I. THE TRIUMPH OF POSITIVISM

(*c.* 1850-1885)

II. THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

(*c.* 1885-1900)

III. THE NEW REALISM AND THE NEW  
IDEALISM

(*c.* 1900-1914)





## PART I

# THE TRIUMPH OF POSITIVISM THE AGE OF SCIENCE AND DOUBT (c. 1850-1885)

## CHAPTER I

### THE SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND INTEL- LECTUAL BACKGROUND (c. 1850-1870)

**T**HE period we are now considering comprises the Second Empire (1852-1870) and the first fifteen years of the Third Republic.

When by the *coup d'état* of December Napoleon III (nephew of the great Napoleon) overthrew the Republican constitution and had himself proclaimed Emperor of the French, he acted as no mere adventurer, thirsty for power, but as a patriot, desiring above all things the welfare of his country, and convinced that the imperial régime would be a panacea for its woes. "The Restoration had failed because its spirit as well as its form was that of the past; the Monarchy of July, because it had existed for the present, without tradition and without ideal; the Republic, because, in its zeal for the future, it had ignored both the present and the past; the Empire alone represented both the reconciliation of order and progress, the facts of the present and the inspiration of the future." <sup>1</sup>

I. THE SOCIAL  
AND HISTORI-  
CAL BACK-  
GROUND  
(1850-1870)

<sup>1</sup> Lowes Dickinson: *Action and Reaction in Modern France*, p. 224.

From the outset Napoleon III's programme was glory abroad, peace, order, and progress at home. The first part of his programme involved him in numerous foreign wars, which for the most part turned out badly for France: the unprofitable Crimean War (1854-1856); the War of Italian Independence (1859-1860), in which the French, inspired by a double-sided policy, helped to expel the Austrians from Italy; intervention in the Mexican War (1863-1867). Finally, in 1870, came the Franco-Prussian War, which Napoleon's previous policy had helped to make possible, and which led to his own overthrow.

As to the second part of his programme, peace and order at home were secured by a repression which the Emperor himself regarded as a temporary and regrettable, though necessary, step towards liberty. The leaders of the Republican and Orleanist parties were driven into exile, and for the first seven or eight years of the new régime political life was stifled, while the stringency of the press laws had, as we shall see, an indirect influence on literature.

By progress Napoleon, who had a natural taste for great commercial and industrial enterprises, understood an increase in material prosperity which should make all classes dread the idea of revolution. He was a Saint-Simonian at heart, and by this time the Saint-Simonians, who, it should be remembered, had always preached the gospel of industry, had abandoned their Utopian schemes and apostolic zeal and thrown themselves heart and soul into business, banking, and railroad construction. Railways had been introduced under Louis Philippe, and so had industry and commerce on a large scale. Under the Second Empire the pace of this kind of progress was quickened at an almost alarming rate. The rapid development of railways and steam-navigation, the cutting of the Suez Canal, the introduction of telegraphy and of a uniform postal rate for the whole of France, all helped to revolutionize commercial and industrial life. A further impetus to trade and industry was supplied by

Napoleon III's  
programme

Material  
prosperity  
under the  
Second Empire

great international exhibitions—the first in London, at the Crystal Palace, in 1851; the second and third in Paris, in 1855 and 1867. This last exhibition, “la Fédération de la Matière,” as the Goncourts contemptuously called it, was attended by nearly all the sovereigns of Europe, and marked the culminating point of the material expansion and prosperity of the Second Empire. The whole nation, peasants, artisans, as well as bourgeois and commercial men, shared in this general well-being; there was work and bread for all. Improved means of communication, resulting in the rapid circulation of the necessities of life, had much to do with this, as had also the extensive sanitation and modernization undertaken in all the great cities of France. The partial rebuilding of Marseilles, Lyons, Bordeaux, Lille, Caen, Rouen, etc., provided work for thousands of artisans and labourers. Paris, which the Emperor hoped to make the metropolis of Europe, was almost entirely rebuilt and modernized—*haussmannisé*, as the jargon of the day has it—for these improvements were carried out under the direction of Haussmann, Prefect of the Seine from 1853 to 1869. Haussmann’s modernization of Paris has been regarded as one of the wonders of the nineteenth century. He swept away hundreds of unhealthy streets and alleys, constructed the *grands boulevards* (one of which bears his name), laid out the Bois de Boulogne, arranged for the building of two new bridges, the Central Markets, and the Opera, and extended the boundaries of the city so as to double its size.

The “epic of productivity and wealth,” writ large during the Second Empire, had an aspect which, obscured at first, was before long to make itself felt. The general lack of idealism which great material prosperity brings in its train, and which in finer spirits induced an aloofness from their age, led in those of commoner clay to a regrettable blindness concerning the larger issues of life. Never, perhaps, was there a time in French history when the facts so completely overshadowed the problem of life. Again, the vast expansion of industry

Consequent  
lack of  
idealism

consequent on the application of steam-machinery to manufacture concentrated the working classes in the towns, and it was not long before a perception of their interests as a class arose among them. By the end of the Second Empire the relation of the State to the working-man and of capital to labour had become, what they still are—the great social problems of modern times.

In the pages dealing with the general intellectual movement of the first half of the nineteenth century no place was given to scientists, because their influence on the thought and methods of literature was non-existent. The

**II. THE  
GENERAL  
MOVEMENT  
OF IDEAS**

Romantics, who were in such close touch with painters and sculptors, broke the bonds which, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, had united scientists and men of letters. Completely preoccupied with themselves and their art, they took little or no interest in the contemporary discoveries of Laplace in mathematics and astronomy, of Ampère and Arago in physics, of Lamarck (the forerunner of Darwin), Cuvier, and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire in natural history. During the second half of the century the dependence of literature on science was, for the interests of art, if anything too close, and the leaders of the realistic and naturalistic schools had scientific pretensions which were frequently out of proportion to their scientific knowledge.

It was during the Second Empire that the chemists Pasteur (1822-1895) and Berthelot (1827-1907), and the physiologist Claude Bernard (1813-1878), to mention only the most important out of a host of lesser names, were making momentous scientific discoveries and bringing about that unity of science as a whole which had been one of Comte's dearest dreams. All these men were indefatigable laboratory workers. In their view, observation and experiment, and not abstract reasoning, were the main avenues to knowledge. To quote from Berthelot's *Science et Philosophie* :

“ Dans la construction de cette pyramide de la science, toutes les assises, de la base au sommet, reposent sur l'observation et l'ex-

périence. C'est un des principes de la science positive qu'aucune réalité ne peut être établie par le raisonnement. Le monde ne saurait être deviné."

The practical applications to curative and preventative medicine of Pasteur's and Claude Bernard's discoveries, and the far-reaching effects of the breach made by Berthelot in the barrier which had hitherto existed between organic and inorganic chemistry, could not fail to interest all intelligent people and to stimulate an interest in science and in scientific method generally, so that before long Pasteur was justified in remarking, "la science fait partie intégrale du sens commun."

These great developments in science, due to the comparatively recent notions of relativity and evolution, and to the ever-increasing application of the experimental method, thus led to the growth of a scientific temper among the more intelligent members of the general public, and in literary men to the development of what may be called the scientific or scholarly conscience. Nor did the influence of science on literature stop at mere scientific method, for men of letters attempted to apply the new scientific theories to their own subjects. Thus, not long after the appearance of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (published 1859, translated into French 1862), his theory of evolution was applied in literary criticism, philology, the study of religious and social institutions. In the same way the determinism worked out by Laplace and applied by Claude Bernard to medicine, and the theory of the influence of environment on which, in zoology, Lamarck and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire had laid such stress, were seized upon for their own purposes by novelists and historians.

The influence of science on the thought, as apart from the subject-matter of literature, is shown in the attempt to explain the universe, from the atom to the human mind, from a purely scientific point of view, and to eliminate from the springs of human conduct all motives for action which science cannot explain.

Influence of  
science on  
literature



The diffusion of the scientific spirit was considerably helped by the philosophical system of Auguste Comte, to which he himself applied the epithet "positive," to distinguish it from the negative or critical philosophy of the eighteenth century, though later positivists used the term as opposed to "hypothetical" or "conjectural."

2. The philosophy of positivism

Auguste Comte (1798-1857), after studying chemistry, physics, and mathematics at the Ecole Polytechnique, and medicine at Montpellier, was in 1817 introduced to Saint-Simon, became his secretary, later his collaborator, and for the time being his enthusiastic disciple. Before long, however, differences arose between the two. Comte, who was a more systematic thinker and possessed greater scientific knowledge than the imaginative and visionary Saint-Simon, wished to reform ideas before reforming institutions, and thought that his fellow-worker in the cause of humanity was in too great a hurry to give practical form to his theories. In 1824 they parted in anger, and henceforward Comte denied that he owed anything to Saint-Simon. Whether this be true or not, most of Comte's general ideas are the same as Saint-Simon's, and the two starting-points of his philosophical system, whether he reached them independently or not, are commonplaces of the Saint-Simonian doctrine; that is to say, that political and social phenomena have their laws like natural phenomena, and that the day has dawned for the establishment and organization of a new spiritual power to replace Catholicism. Comte's spiritual power, like Saint-Simon's, was to consist of a body of scientists (in Comte's scheme, sociologists) whose duty it should be to direct society in the light of the positive truths of science.

Again, like Saint-Simon, Comte was a firm believer in progress, and he explains the whole progress of humanity by what he calls the Law of the Three Stages. In the first or theological stage of his development, man sought successively in fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism a supernatural explanation of the

The Law of the Three Stages

universe and of natural phenomena. In the second or metaphysical stage, which Comte dates from the fourteenth century, man sought to interpret the universe by the hypothesis of abstract forces. In the third which Comte saw dawning—the positive stage—man seeks to understand himself and the universe by scientific methods, for in Comte's view nothing can be real or positive except such phenomena as lend themselves to observation or experiment.

“ Dans l'état positif, l'esprit humain, reconnaissant l'impossibilité d'obtenir des notions absolues, renonce à chercher l'origine et la destination de l'univers et de connaître les causes intimes des phénomènes, pour s'attacher uniquement à découvrir, par l'usage bien combiné du raisonnement et de l'observation, leurs lois effectives, c'est-à-dire leurs relations invariables de succession ou de similitude.”<sup>1</sup>

As he looks back over the ages, Comte singles out the social and spiritual organization of medieval Catholicism for high praise. Because of its unity and continuity, and its separation of the temporal from the spiritual power, he regards this organization as “le chef d'œuvre politique de la sagesse humaine,” but he looks forward to an equally good, if not better, organization under the ægis of science.

In the hierarchy of the sciences, classified in the order of their complexity and dependence on each other, Comte gives sociology the highest place, holding, however, that it was impossible for it to develop until the two next in the scale, biology and chemistry, had assumed a truly scientific form. This being now the case, sociology can and must be developed into a positive science and co-ordinated with all the other sciences into an organic whole, for then, and only then, can men embark on the last and positive stage of their development.

Such are, very briefly, the leading ideas in Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, the six volumes of which appeared between 1830 and 1848, and which he later summarized in *Le Catéchisme du Positivisme* (1852). In his last work, the *Système de Politique Positive* (1851-1854),

<sup>1</sup> *Cours de Philosophie Positive*.

Comte gives a further development to his doctrine by transforming his spiritual power into a non-theological, non-metaphysical religion—the religion of humanity, which was to be organized, as Catholicism had been, to form a vast international association, working for the spiritual and moral welfare of humanity and spreading the light by means of science and scientific philosophy; in fact, as Huxley wittily remarks, it was to be “a Catholicism without Christianity.” Outside purely positivist circles this last development of Comte’s system was never accepted, and consequently had no influence.

Faguet describes Comte as “le semeur d’idées et l’excitateur intellectuel le plus puissant qui ait été en notre siècle, le plus grand penseur . . . que la France ait eu depuis Descartes,”<sup>1</sup> and this because he not only built a bridge between the natural and the moral sciences and laid the foundations of sociology, but because he perceived and made capital of a new tendency of the human mind which consists in transferring to science the faith which had hitherto been reserved for the mysteries of religion or metaphysics.

Comte, who corresponded with and influenced John Stuart Mill, was little known outside a small circle in France until after 1850, but through his disciple Littré (the author of the standard French dictionary), and more particularly through the early writings of Renan, the later criticism of Sainte-Beuve, and the philosophical, historical, and literary researches of Taine, who absorbed Comte unconsciously through Mill, his leading principles became current coin not only in the speculative sciences, but in literary criticism, history, the novel, and even in poetry.

<sup>1</sup> *Politiques et Moralistes*, ii, p. 369.

## CHAPTER II

### REALISM AND NATURALISM

A FAILURE to perceive similarity amid apparent diversity, a tendency to see revolution where there is only evolution, impairs the value of much that has been written about recent literary schools. The error is the more difficult to avoid, because the leaders of these schools have generally deemed themselves revolutionaries in the realm of art, and because the lapse of time alone makes it possible to see an intellectual or artistic movement in its true perspective.

Most critics hold that by the middle of the nineteenth century romanticism was definitely on the wane, if not actually in its death-throes, and that at the turn of the half-century something new and opposed to it arose to take its place. Yet, if one takes a large panoramic view, it would seem that, allowing for certain differences of aim and method and certain eliminations, due to a reaction against the excesses of romanticism, French literature of the second half of the nineteenth century and of the early years of the twentieth was still in the main romantic—in other words, that realism, naturalism, impressionism, Parnasianism, symbolism, and all other minor “isms” which have succeeded each other so rapidly since 1850, are only so many branches on the tree of romanticism, and that consequently the whole period might conveniently be labelled Neo-Romantic.

It would be easy to prove the affinity that exists between romanticism and symbolism ; it is perhaps a little more



difficult to see the connection between the romanticism of 1830 and the realism which flourished in the novel after 1850, and which on the surface seems so utterly opposed to it.

THE GROWTH OF  
REALISM  
1. The realism  
of the  
Romantics

Though it was not until about 1850 that the word realism came to be used as a term of literary criticism, the realistic tendency was no new thing, and is apparent to those who care to seek it throughout the romantic movement. Indeed, in a book entitled *Le Réalisme des Romantiques*, Pellissier has no difficulty in proving that

“la littérature romantique comparée avec celles des deux siècles précédents s’y oppose presque sur tous les points comme réaliste.”

Realism was, in fact, implicit in the romantic doctrine as preached by Victor Hugo in his *Préface de Cromwell*. Truth drawn from nature itself without the interposition of literary models or rules and the substitution of the particular for the general, the characteristic for the beautiful, were the watchwords of that manifesto and of all the young poets who grouped themselves round the master. Yet romanticism as elaborated by its French exponents was a curious amalgamation of principles which tended to paralyse each other. Poets might preach and endeavour to practise truth to nature, but as they also preached and practised the most extreme individualism, their outlook was so much tinged with imagination and feeling, so much determined by a predilection for the exceptional, that their realism was in the main limited to mirroring such realities as were unusual or little known. The desire to render local colour in time and space as illustrated by the historical and exotic novel of the romantic period represents this particular form of realism. Stendhal, who sought reality in foreign lands and in France, and who defined the novel as “un miroir qui se promène sur une grand’route,” and more particularly Balzac, who concentrated on the portrayal of the manners of his day, were pure realists as regards the setting and descriptive detail of their novels, though in choice of plots

*Not a romanticism*



and characters they were not. Nevertheless, they were both claimed as literary ancestors by the later realists, especially at first, before the latter became fully aware how truly Stendhal expressed his attitude towards the real when he remarked, "je détourne mes yeux de tout ce qui est bas ; je sympathise avec tout ce qui est contes d'amour . . . de générosité," and before they had begun to take exception to Balzac's imaginative qualities and his fondness for introducing personal reflections into his novels.

A glance at the entries in the chronological table between 1840 and 1850 reveals a complete absence of lyrical poetry, Lamartine and Musset having laid down their lyres for good, Alfred de Vigny and Victor Hugo for the time being. After the failure of *Les Burgraves* and the triumph of Ponsard's *Lucrèce* (1842), the romantic drama was discredited ; the romantic novel and short story were torn between social preoccupations (George Sand) and art for art's sake (Mérimee), while Balzac, in spite of certain clearly romantic elements, pursued his realistic way until in 1850 it was cut short by death.

Nor did he pursue it alone, for during these years, in circles into which writers who had made their name rarely, if ever, penetrated, a number of now forgotten painters and novelists were independently working their way towards realism.

After the Revolution of 1830, a group of writers and artists who prided themselves on their eccentricity, and of whom Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Arsène Houssaye, and Petrus Borel were the leading lights, foregathered in a house in the Rue Doyenné, styled themselves "les jeune France," and did their utmost to lead a Bohemian existence. From the literary point of view, the history of this group—"la Bohème galante," as they retrospectively called themselves when in middle age they looked back upon their wild and golden youth—is inseparable from that of romanticism generally.

But in the early forties there arose another Bohemia, the

2. The progress  
of realism  
between 1840  
and 1857

(1) La Bohème  
before 1848

members of which were no mere dilettanti, but for the most part needy young men from the provinces, who, having come to Paris to make their fortune as painters, poets, or musicians, were often quite unable to make both ends meet, and yet succeeded in assuming that happy-go-lucky attitude towards the material difficulties of life which, combined with a certain unconventionality of behaviour, is generally associated with Bohemianism. At first their rendezvous was the Café Momus, in the Latin quarter. Here they installed themselves with their easels, their musical instruments, and their writing materials, and it may be assumed that they generally had the place to themselves.

This Bohemia would now be forgotten were it not for the fact that it counted amongst its number three men whose works not only enjoyed a certain vogue in their own day, but also helped to establish the doctrine of realism. These three men were—in the order of their importance in this latter connection—the painter Courbet, a later arrival, and the novelists Champfleury and Murger.

Murger and Champfleury, mediocre novelists though they be, are interesting because they so clearly reflect the connection between the romanticism of 1830 and the realism of a later date. In the early days the bonds which united all these frequenters of the Café Momus were their poverty and their romanticism. Would-be poets and novelists in the romantic manner justified all their extravagances in prose and verse by the doctrine of the freedom of art, and their favourite themes were the *beau ténébreux* and the artist misunderstood by society. They likewise revelled in personal confession, but so great was the contrast between their romantic ideals on the one hand and their daily life and surroundings on the other, that when they came to set down their confidences in prose, short of omitting personal experiences altogether, they were inevitably led to a certain realism of treatment. Again, living as they did amongst eccentrics of every kind, they were able to paint the exceptional and the grotesque from real life, and had no need to invent it as the Romantics perforce had done.

Murger and Champfleury, who for a long time shared a lodging in the Latin quarter, are the best representatives of this gradual transformation of romanticism in Bohemian circles—through the transition stage of the so-called “*école fantaisiste*.”

Murger and  
Champfleury  
before 1848

Henry Murger (1822–1861), the son of a tailor, after acting for some time as secretary to Count Alexei Tolstoi, and at the same time trying his hand unsuccessfully at poetry and journalism, made his name by his *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* and *Scènes de la Vie de Jeunesse*, which appeared in the pages of the *Corsaire* from 1846 to 1848, and were collected in book-form in 1851. In the interval the *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* were arranged for the stage, and produced at the Variétés in November, 1849, while many years later they formed the basis of Puccini's opera, *La Bohème* (1898). This first work of Murger's remained his masterpiece. It is a fantasy embroidered on the real fortunes and misfortunes, loves, studies, and amusements of La Bohème by the imagination and witty good-humour of one of its leading members—the Rudolphe of the stories. Such representatives of the bourgeoisie as cross his pages are cruelly caricatured, while all his artists are idealized probably with intention, for, as he remarks towards the beginning of the book:

“Les Scènes de la Vie de Bohème ne sont . . . que des études de mœurs dont les héros appartiennent à une classe maljugée jusqu'ici, et dont le plus grand défaut est le désordre; et encore peuvent-ils donner pour excuse que ce désordre même est une nécessité que leur fait la vie.”

Champfleury (1821–1889), whose novels and tales are no longer read, was destined to play an important rôle in the campaign of realism. He began his literary career as an art critic, and continued this form of journalism intermittently throughout his life. His early stories, of which *Les Confessions de Sylvius*, which appeared in the *Corsaire* for 1885–1886, is a good example, are drawn chiefly from Bohemian life somewhat

Champfleury  
(Jules Husson)  
(1821–1889)

embellished, but they lay great stress on the material difficulties of the artistic career. Champfleury underlines the eccentricities and affectations of the artist, and delights, even more than Murger, whom he preceded, in throwing a strong light on the solemn and consequential stupidity of the bourgeois. Now, contempt for the bourgeois, the philistine, had been almost a canon of art with the Romantics, but none of them—with the notable exception of Balzac, who definitely set out to paint all classes of society—had deigned to introduce him into their works even for the purpose of satire. *La Bohème*, on the other hand, took a special delight in doing so, especially as time went on; but artists in caricature had been before them, and this raises the interesting question of the influence of the plastic arts on the development of realism.

Romanticism in art and literature went hand in hand, though it was literature which led the way. In the gradual detachment of realism from romanticism, however, the influence was reversed, and seems first to have made itself felt in the Bohemian circle of which we have just been speaking. That

artists in caricature should have been first in the field was, no doubt, natural, for, as Paul Gaultier remarks: “*La caricature que beaucoup prennent pour un art du rire est à coup sûr un art de la laideur s’il semble bien que de ne montrer que le vilain côté des choses, les tares et les taches.*”<sup>1</sup> Until the nineteenth century, in France as elsewhere, with the notable exception of Hogarth in England, caricature had consisted almost entirely in deformations of the lines of the human body and in distortions and contortions of the human face. French caricature, timid and ineffective under the *ancien régime*, assumed great importance under the Revolution, though without acquiring any artistic merit, being merely libellous and hideously grotesque. Under the peaceable and materialistic régime of Louis Philippe, with the despised bourgeois in the ascendant, French caricaturists wrought a change in the matter

<sup>1</sup> Paul Gaultier: *Le Rire et la Caricature* (1906), p. 6.



and manner of their ironic art by bringing it far closer to reality than it had ever been before. With them it is no longer a question of arousing laughter by means of distortion or lack of proportion, but by accentuating in the bearing or facial expression of their models the significant trait which reveals some evil, foolish, or vulgar tendency.

The earliest in date of these caricaturists was Henri Monnier (1802-1876), who in his *Scènes de la Vie Populaire* (1830), realistic sketches in dialogue form accompanied by pen-and-ink drawings by his own hand, was the first to give at once literary and plastic expression to the contempt for the bourgeois prevailing in romantic circles. Here, as in the later *Scènes de la Ville et de la Campagne* (1841) and the *Physiologie du Bourgeois*, the drawings only bring out superficial absurdities of gesture and expression, while the scenes themselves, all copied as exactly as possible from lower middle-class life, are those in which nothing remarkable happens and nothing interesting is said. Henri Monnier's name still lives as the creator of M. Joseph Prudhomme, the writing-master who incarnates his author's conception of the typical bourgeois of 1830 or thereabouts.<sup>1</sup> This pompous and sententious character already appears in his early sketches, and is the hero of the later *Mémoires de M. Joseph Prudhomme* (1857).

Shortly after the appearance of *Les Scènes Populaires*, Charles Philipon (1802-1862), who has been styled "the father of comic journalism," and who was no mean caricaturist himself, founded two papers, *La Caricature* (1831-1835) and *Le Charivari* (1832 to the present day), the prototype of *Punch*, the *London Charivari* (founded 1840). Among the caricaturists whose services he secured for these papers were Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) and Charles Traviès, who respectively dubbed their typical bourgeois *Macaire* and *Mayeux*, and whom Champfleury, in the Preface to his *Histoire de la Caricature Moderne* (1865), refers to, together with Henri Monnier, as "les démolisseurs de la bourgeoisie."

<sup>1</sup> Later Monnier made Prudhomme the hero of a comedy bearing the title *Grandeur et Décadence de Joseph Prudhomme* (1852).



Another member of Philippon's band was Sulpice Guillaume Chevalier (1801-1806), better known under the *nom de guerre* Gavarni, which he adopted in affectionate remembrance of a valley in the Pyrenees where he made his first published sketch. Gavarni was an extremely clever caricaturist of all classes of Parisian society, with a special fondness for the elegantly dressed, owing, no doubt, to the fact that, before he joined the staff of *Le Charivari*, he had designed models for various fashion journals. Between 1840 and 1850 he illustrated Sue's *Juif Errant*, Dumas' *Comte de Monte Christo*, the French translation of Hoffmann's *Fantastic Tales*, and the first collected edition of Balzac's novels.

There can be no doubt that these clever and telling caricaturists considerably helped the cause of realism, especially Daumier, the prince of the quartette :

"Ce ne sont plus des portraits sur une feuille de papier," exclaims Champfleury, who was one of his most ardent admirers. "Tous ces hommes vivent, remuent, écoutent, regardent comme dans la vie." <sup>1</sup>

Champfleury knew Daumier personally—they frequently met at the Brasserie Andler in the Rue Hauteville, whither, about 1846, the former frequenters of the Café Momus had transferred their gatherings, and where, side by side with the Bohemians of the early days, were to be found, besides Daumier, the painters Corot and Courbet, the socialist Proudhon (who later prided himself on discovering a whole social philosophy in Courbet's pictures), the poet Baudelaire, and the literary critic Emile Montégut.

Pure romanticism in painting was destined to be more short-lived than romanticism in literature. In the early thirties the famous quarrel between

(ii) Landscape painting

Ingres and Delacroix about line and colour marks its waning in the plastic arts, though Delacroix himself, of whom it has been said that he was "à lui seul le romantisme fait art," <sup>2</sup> remained, like Victor Hugo, a convinced romantic to the day of his death (1863).

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de la Caricature Moderne.*

<sup>2</sup> Rocheblave: *Le Goût en France* (1914).

The reaction against the violence, high colouring, and careless drawing which romanticism had brought in its train is most clearly seen in the work of a small group of landscape painters, who, refusing to treat either conventional or exotic scenes, went straight to the woods and fields of France for their inspiration. This group, later known as the Barbizon school, because most of its members settled in the village of that name, near the forest of Fontainebleau, began exhibiting in the early thirties, and its leaders, Corot (1796-1875), Rousseau (1812-1867), and Millet (1814-1875), now rank amongst the greatest artists of their time. Corot's work is throughout more individual and poetic than that of any other member of the school, but his earlier manner has much less of the mistiness, mystery, and poetry, which characterizes his landscapes from about 1865 onwards. Of the three, Millet has the most clearly marked realistic tendencies. Peasants working in the fields were his favourite subject, and in pictures like *Le Vanneur* (1848), *Le Semeur* (1850), *Les Glaneuses* (1857), and *L'Angélus* (1860), he gives a faithful and unexaggerated rendering of certain everyday occurrences in the lives of those who toil on the land. In connection with the history of realism, however, the most important painter who made his name at the turn of the half-century was Courbet.

(iii) Genre-  
painting.  
Gustave Cour-  
bet  
(1819-1877)

Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), born of peasant stock at Ornans, in Franche-Comté, came to Paris in 1829, and began his career as an artist by painting literary subjects in the romantic style. But these he soon abandoned for the study of real life, and from 1848 onwards he led a campaign against the then prevalent idea that the only object of plastic art was to inspire beautiful thoughts by the representation of beautiful images. Courbet maintained that painters can only paint well what they have actually seen, and that the modern artist should therefore limit himself to his native landscape, animal studies, and scenes from contemporary life. In 1849 he wrote an open letter to the art critics of the

*Revue des Deux Mondes*, ending with the words : "Où, il fait encanailler l'art. Il y a trop longtemps que les poètes nos contemporains font de l'art à idées et d'après des cartons." Courbet practised what he preached, choosing modern and somewhat trivial subjects and signing his efforts : "Courbet sans idéal et sans religion." In the Salon of 1849 he exhibited seven pictures, among them *Une Après-dînée à Ornans* and *Le Vendange d'Ornans*. Champfleury wrote in high praise of this new painter whom he considered that he had discovered, made Courbet's acquaintance, and henceforward remained his faithful ally. Three pictures, *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la Foire*, *Les Casseurs de Pierre*, and *L'Enterrement d'Ornans*, exhibited by Courbet at the Salon of 1851, caused a great stir, and definitely raised the question of realism. Champfleury took it upon himself to define Courbet's manner :

"Est-ce la faute du peintre si les intérêts matériels, si la vie de petite ville, si des égoïsmes sourds, si la mesquinerie de province clouent leurs griffes sur la figure, éteignent les yeux, plissent le front, hébètent la bouche ? Les bourgeois sont ainsi. M. Courbet a peint les bourgeois."

In 1853 Courbet's *Baigneuses* caused an even greater scandal. Dissatisfied with the place assigned to him in the International Exhibition of 1855, Courbet opened a private exhibition of his pictures and issued a catalogue containing his realistic profession of faith, the gist of which was in his own words—"Le fond du réalisme c'est la négation de l'idéal et de tout ce qui s'ensuit," or in the words which Théodore de Banville and Paul Boyer put into his mouth in the *Feuilleton d'Aristophane*, a revue in which Courbet figures under the name of Réalista<sup>1</sup> :

"Faire vrai, ce n'est rien pour être réaliste,  
C'est faire laid qu'il faut ! Oui, monsieur s'il vous plaît,  
Tout ce que je dessine est horriblement laid,  
Ma peinture est affreuse, et, pour qu'elle soit vraie,  
J'en arrache le beau comme on fait de l'ivraie."

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<sup>1</sup> *Messenger de l'Assemblée Nationale*, Feb. 26, 1851, quoted by Martino : *Le Roman Réaliste sous le second Empire* (1913).

After launching his manifesto, Courbet retired from the fray and spent the rest of his life painting animals, landscapes, and seascapes, leaving propaganda in the hands of Champfleury.

Since Champfleury's early ventures in the tale of Bohemian life, he had come under the influence of (3) Champfleury and Murger (after 1848) Balzac, Henri Monnier, and Daumier, to say nothing of Courbet himself, whose æsthetic theories he immediately transferred from art to literature, notably in *Les Oies de Noël* (1850), *Les Eccentriques* (1852), *Les Aventures de Mariette* (1853), and *Les Bourgeois de Molinchart* (1855), the interest of which depends purely on their realism. At the same time he influenced his friend Murger in a realistic direction, as may be seen in the cleverly drawn provincial types of the latter's *Pays Latin* and in that forerunner of M. Homais, the ignorant, self-satisfied bourgeois M. Bridoux, of *Les Buveurs d'Eau* (contributed to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1853-1854)). In 1857, just after the appearance of *Madame Bovary*, Champfleury collected his chief critical articles in a volume entitled *Le Réalisme*, from the preface of which one gathers that the writer must represent real life without altering the smallest detail, or, as its author expressed it later in *Les Souvenirs de Jeunesse* :

"Ce que je vois entre dans ma tête, descend dans ma plume et devient ce que j'ai vu. La méthode est simple et à la portée de tout le monde. Mais que de temps il faut pour se débarrasser des souvenirs, des imitations, du milieu où l'on vit et pour retrouver sa propre nature."

Complete sincerity in art was his cry, and it was also the cry of a monthly periodical founded by some of his now-forgotten disciples—*Réalisme*, which during the six months of its existence inveighs against art for art's sake and preaches contemporary subjects—ugly ones, if need be.

Champfleury's novels enjoyed a considerable vogue at the time of their appearance, and undoubtedly helped to accustom the general public to the methods and results of realistic art, if not actually to create a taste for it. The intensely artistic Flaubert had, as one can imagine, no



admiration for the intensely inartistic Champfleury, yet the appearance of *Les Bourgeois de Molinchart*, the setting of which has a certain similarity with that of *Madame Bovary*, over which Flaubert was still toiling, made him regret that he had been forestalled in the subject of his choice.<sup>1</sup> The Goncourts in their *Journal* refer more than once to Champfleury, though generally in a somewhat hostile tone. In an early novel, *Charles Demailly*, he is introduced under the guise of Pommageot, and made to exclaim: "Je pense que le génie n'est qu'une mémoire sténographique." Zola, on the other hand, both read and appreciated him, and, curiously enough, does not seem to differentiate very clearly between him and Flaubert.<sup>2</sup>

Champfleury's novels, despite the fact that they have no literary merit, mark a date in the history of realism—that is to say, the moment when that literary current freed itself from other counter-acting tendencies. Moreover, they represent the typical example of realism developing out of romanticism without the influence of science or the scientific spirit, but under the influence of a Bohemian life led in close contact with sordid reality, and under the stimulus of new tendencies in the plastic arts, notably in caricature and painting. More than any other writer of his day, Champfleury accustomed the general public to the methods and results of realism in literature, thus paving the way for Flaubert, the Goncourts, and Zola.

The realism which dominated French literature from about 1850 to about 1885, and which has been defined as

GENERAL  
CHARACTERIS-  
TICS OF  
FRENCH  
REALISM

Realism and  
naturalism

"le système qui reproduit de la réalité ce qui relève le plus directement de la sensation, c'-à-d. le côté extérieur et matériel des hommes et des choses,"<sup>3</sup>

of two kinds. On the one hand, there was the artistic

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Correspondance*, iii, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Zola: *Correspondance*, ii, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> David-Sauvageot: *Le Réalisme et le Naturalisme*.



realism championed by the school which took "art for art's sake" as its device (Gautier, Flaubert, the Parnassians, Baudelaire); on the other, the pseudo-scientific realism or naturalism of which Zola was the admitted master, and which he defines as "la formule de la science moderne appliquée à la littérature," and which he might equally well have defined as "art in the interests of science."

Both schools aim at representing things as they really are, and one might, therefore, have expected them to do justice to life as a whole, but representing, as they did, a reaction against the idealistic, imaginative, and sentimental attitude in literature, both tended to eliminate all those realities which are compatible with idealism and emotion, and to substitute for them the realities which had hitherto been regarded as unsuitable for artistic treatment, i.e. the ordinary humdrum aspect of life, and more especially its sordid and seamy side. The naturalists take ordinary, and often abnormal, contemporary life as their sole domain, and make an almost photographic record of commonplace and trivial fact in all its vulgar and uninteresting detail, so that their works give the intended impression of being slices of life cut at random from brute reality. The artistic realists, on the other hand, never went so far as to believe that because the true is not always beautiful, the ugly must always be true. From the dreariness and ugliness of contemporary life they, like the romantics, though in a more scientific and archæological spirit, made frequent excursions into the realm of realities distant in time and space; and even when working on unpromising material in nineteenth-century France, they still endeavoured to give a heightened impression of the real by choosing their slice of life among those which have a certain value as wholes and by concentrating on the significant and illuminating detail. For the devotees of art for art's sake aimed not only at scientific exactitude to truth, but also at perfection of workmanship and of form in its widest sense. The belief in art for its own sake, which was already implicitly contained in the *Préface de Cromwell*, was, on the one hand, a

reaction against the romantic practice of subordinating perfection of workmanship to emotion, rapture, etc., and, on the other, the result of the stringency of the press laws during the early years of the Second Empire. The Imperial Government prohibited men of letters, under pain of fine and imprisonment, from introducing into their works, directly or indirectly, anything remotely connected with politics or social science. Since the burning questions of the day were a forbidden topic, and since the growth of industrialism could only be regarded by artists as both soul and beauty-killing, it was natural that they should withdraw into their ivory towers and cultivate art for art's sake.

Despite Zola's protestations, with the naturalists form and workmanship were only a secondary consideration, largely because naturalism came more and more to mean a confusion of art with science. Zola goes so far as to say :

" La science est donc, à vrai dire, de la poésie expliquée ; un savant est un poète qui remplace les hypothèses de l'imagination par l'étude exacte des choses et des êtres." <sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the aims and methods of naturalism in its extreme form lie outside art altogether, for it implies that the human subject-matter of literature can be measured and analysed in precisely the same way as the materials of the physical sciences. Zola and Taine may or may not be right when they respectively declare that " l'hérédité a ses lois comme la pesanteur," and that " le vice et la vertu sont des produits comme le sucre et le vitriol " ; but whereas the laws of gravity are fully known, those of heredity are not, at any rate as yet, while vice and virtue are such complex products that so far they have defied the kind of analysis which can be applied to sugar or vitriol.

The determinism to which the naturalists were committed in advance can at best only account for a certain number of the facts of life, and so their works are, to say the least of it, only " the superficial transcript of a very limited reality." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Le Roman Expérimental*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> McDowall: *Realism: A Study in Art and Thought* (1918).

For the artistic realist the purpose of art was æsthetic pleasure, which he thought could be best attained by representing the reality which appeals to the senses rather than that which appeals to the mind or to the imagination. For the thorough-going naturalist, on the other hand, the purpose of art was utilitarian, and in a measure didactic.

"Nos romans," writes Zola, "recherchent les causes, les expliquent, amassent des documents humains, pour qu'on puisse être le maître du milieu et de l'homme de façon à développer les bons éléments et à exterminer les mauvais." <sup>1</sup>

In spite of these divergencies in aim and method, realists and naturalists have a good many characteristics in common. Both groups were the sons of science, but they were also the heirs of romanticism, and though they refused to touch certain parts of their romantic inheritance, others they seized upon gladly, modifying them, extending them, and sometimes degrading them for their own uses. The relation of realism and naturalism to romanticism is thus at once derivative and reactionary. On the negative side the reaction is seen in an endeavour to eliminate from art much that the romantics had cherished: idealism, for instance, the treatment of the problem of life in its wide sense, and the purely subjective attitude and method. Positively, it, manifests itself in an attempt to limit art to the treatment of actual concrete reality, understood as an indefinite succession of the small facts and details of life. At the same time, both realists and naturalists subordinated the creative imagination to observation in a far greater degree than the great classical writers had subordinated it to reason.

Idealism, which, from an æsthetic point of view, means the correction of reality by art, or better, perhaps, reality captured in its highest and finest moments, was deliberately eschewed by the new school.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Roman Expérimental*, p. 84.

"Notre querelle avec les idéalistes," writes Zola, "est uniquement, dans ce fait que nous partons de l'observation et de l'expérience tandis qu'ils partent d'un absolu."<sup>1</sup>

Hence the refusal of the champions of art for art's sake and of naturalism to regard the artist as a leader of men, still less as an inspired pilot of the ship of state. Hence also their refusal to defend any cause or doctrine. "Tout livre à tendances cesse d'être un livre d'artiste,"<sup>2</sup> declares Flaubert; but here artistic realists and naturalists part company, for the latter, like Courbet and Champfleury, hope by their human documents to point a moral rather than to adorn a tale. As for the problem of life—the meaning of existence—which had been a favourite lyrical theme with the romantics, both parties leave it severely alone.

"La rage de vouloir conclure est une des manies les plus funestes et les plus stériles qui appartiennent à l'humanité,"<sup>2</sup>

writes Flaubert and Zola agrees with him:

"On étudie la nature et l'homme, on classe les documents, on avance pas à pas, en employant la méthode expérimentale et analytique, mais on se garde bien de conclure."<sup>3</sup>

This abstention was partly, no doubt, due to the influence of science and of the positivist philosophy, but partly also to the fact that it is difficult to deal with the problem of life without revealing a personal point of view, and on no point was the *thou shalt not* of all realists as categorical as on this one.

"Dans l'idéal que j'ai de l'art," writes Flaubert to George Sand, "je crois que . . . l'artiste ne doit pas plus apparaître dans son œuvre que Dieu dans la nature."

<sup>1</sup> *Le Roman Expérimental*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Flaubert: *Correspondance*.

<sup>3</sup> Zola: *Le Roman Expérimental*, p. 83.

Instead of making his novel and poems the vehicle for personal emotion and confession as the romantic had done, the realist effaces himself as far as possible behind his work, for he believes that he will neither see true nor render faithfully if he allows his own feelings and individuality to intervene. This does not mean that he is impassive—who less so at heart than Flaubert or Leconte de Lisle?—but that he dominates his emotion and refuses to set aught down on paper until he has conquered it at least for the time being.

“(2) Elimination of subjective attitude and method, but not of author's individuality”  
 “Je n'ai pas dit qu'il fallait se supprimer le cœur, mais le contenir hélas,” explains Flaubert to George Sand, and again: “Il faut par un effort d'esprit se transporter dans les personnages et non les tirer à soi.”<sup>1</sup> Nor is this principle of self-repression intended to exclude individuality from art. Individuality should reveal itself not in personal effusions, but in the way the artist reacts to his environment and in his style. In his preface to *Pierre et Jean*, Maupassant quotes some advice once given him by Flaubert:

“Il s'agit de regarder tout ce qu'on veut exprimer assez longtemps et avec assez d'attention pour en découvrir un aspect qui n'ait été vu et dit par personne. Il y a dans tout de l'inexploré parce que nous sommes habitués à ne nous servir de nos yeux qu'avec le souvenir de ce qu'on a pensé avant nous sur ce que nous contemplons.”

For all the writers of this school, though they refused to display their personal *emotions*, made a point of rendering their personal *sensations*, which to their mind offered, without loss of dignity, a far wider scope for revealing originality and distinction.

“Nous renoncerions à avoir une langue personnelle, une langue portant notre signature et nous descendrions à parler le langage omnibus des faits divers?”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Flaubert: *Correspondance*, iii, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> *Chérie*, Préface.



asks Edmond de Goncourt, and his answer to this rhetorical question is a categorical negative.

The realists and naturalists may thus be said to have made an article of faith of their abstention from certain romantic tendencies. Others they followed, sometimes intentionally, sometimes, it would seem, almost against their will. That the observation of external reality and the belief in the independence of art, on which their whole æsthetic system rested, were a direct inheritance from romanticism, we have already seen. But there were other points, too, in which these neo-romantics were the heirs of the generation of 1830.

First and foremost there is the legacy of style and language. Even Zola, who has little good to say of the romantics, freely admits this indebtedness, though he regards it as the only one.

'Ils venaient surtout parce qu'ils avaient une besogne considérable à accomplir, c'était le renouvellement de la langue. . . . Il fallait, je le répète, une génération de poètes lyriques pour empanacher la langue, pour en faire un instrument large, souple et brillant. . . . Les romantiques venaient à leur heure, ils conquéraient la liberté de la forme, ils forgeaient l'outil dont le siècle devait se servir. . . . Nous tous, écrivains de la seconde moitié du siècle, nous sommes donc, comme stylistes, les enfants des romantiques. . . . Les meilleurs d'entre nous doivent leur rhétorique aux poètes et aux prosateurs de 1830.'<sup>1</sup>

Again, the neo-romantics indulged in the same attitude of aristocratic aloofness from the rest of mankind as their immediate forerunners. Both schools believed that the artist should live for his art alone, and that his place, whether he be an inspired seer, or merely a clear-sighted observer, is "above the battle." Hence romantics and neo-romantics are alike over-conscious of the isolation of the artist unappreciated, if not actually misunderstood, by his fellow-men. This was undoubtedly one of the causes of the later, as of the earlier, *mal du siècle*. The neo-romantics had other reasons, too, for their pessimism, some connected

<sup>1</sup> *Le Roman Expérimental*, pp. 67, 68, 92.

with their attitude towards art, others with their philosophy of life. No writers were ever more obsessed than they by the difficulty of art. "Oh, nous aurons été les martyrs du livre," cry the Goncourts; and again: "Concevoir, créer, il y a dans ces deux mots pour l'homme de lettres un monde d'efforts douloureux et d'angoisses."<sup>1</sup> Again, idealists at heart, as they nearly all were, they suffered in their self-imposed task of representing the reality they actually saw, and not the reality they fain would have seen. Added to this, they lived in an age of sceptical criticism in religion, philosophy, and politics. The *coup d'état* of 1852 had rung the death-knell of the idealistic movement by condemning its theories and dispersing its leaders. The Utopians and dreamers who had paved the way for the Revolution of 1848 had failed to realize their political and social hopes, and so had brought ideas and ideals into discredit. Lastly, the age in which realism and naturalism flourished was, as we have seen, one in which recent developments in science tended to impress and depress all thoughtful people with the fatality of physical and physiological law, for, as Vigny so forcibly expresses it:

- "La Science

Trace autour de la terre un chemin triste et droit.  
Le monde est rétréci par notre expérience,  
Et l'équateur n'est plus qu'un anneau trop étroit,  
Plus de hasard. Chacun glissera sur sa ligne,  
Immobile au seul rang que le départ assigne,  
Plongé dans un calcul silencieux et froid."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the pessimism which pervades the literature produced in the second half of the nineteenth century, and which was in some ways a continuation of the earlier *mal du siècle*, was reinforced from other sources, and, though less openly displayed, was more reasoned and more fundamental than its romantic counterpart.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, 1862 and 1869.

<sup>2</sup> *La Maison du Berger*.

Closely connected both with their attitude towards art and their attitude towards life was another tradition which the new generation brought over from romanticism—that is, contempt for the bourgeois, regarded as the incarnation of stupid mediocrity and of gross materialism. So great had been the disdain of the romantics for the MM. Prudhommes of this world that, with the exception of Balzac, who aimed at painting all classes of society, they gave them no place in their novels or dramas. The neo-romantics, on the other hand, make a point of doing so, if only to show that they have good ground for their dislike of the bourgeois and all his ways, for, as Flaubert justly remarks in a letter to George Sand : “Le mieux est de les peindre tout bonnement, ces choses qui vous exaspèrent. Disséquer est une vengeance.” In this connection it is perhaps worth remarking that one of the chief of the abstentions of the realists in verse and prose—the refusal to betray emotion—was influenced by their contempt of the bourgeois, if this contempt was not its actual starting-point. The emotional effusions and confessions which had scandalized the bourgeois of 1830 had, in a degraded form, and provided by a host of second-rate imitators, become by 1850 his everyday literary fare. The sentimental and personal element in literature had thus in the eyes of the literary artist become banal, not to say vulgar, and was to be avoided, if only on the grounds of good taste. “Le sentiment,” remarks Baudelaire, “par sa nature populaire et familière, attire exclusivement la foule.”<sup>1</sup> And Flaubert exclaims : “Donner au public des détails sur soi-même est une *tentation de bourgeois* à laquelle j’ai toujours résisté.”<sup>2</sup> Curiously enough, the bourgeois seems to have been at one and the same time an object of repulsion and of attraction to the realists. He repulsed them by reason of his ignorance and stupidity, his utilitarian point of view, his incomprehension and indifference in matters of art, his lack of idealism in life,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Art Romantique*—article on Théophile Gautier.

<sup>2</sup> Flaubert: *Correspondance*, iv, p. 337.

manners, and language ; but he attracted them also, and this by reason of his grotesqueness—i.e. that curious mixture of the comic and the ugly which the romantics had regarded as an essential element in art because of its value as a foil to beauty, and which the realists and naturalists came to regard as having an independent value of its own.

And this brings us to the last important characteristic which the new school inherited from the romantics—<sup>(5) A taste for the exaggerated, the rare, and the abnormal</sup> a taste for the exaggerated, the rare, and the abnormal. Baudelaire and the Goncourts were the extreme examples of this tendency, but all the writers of their generation shared it in a greater or lesser degree. It was partly, no doubt, a survival of the traditional desire to shock the bourgeois, but still more the result of trying to avoid the commonplace while keeping within the bounds of actual reality. Zola reproaches the romantics with “une continuelle et monstrueuse exagération du réel, une fantaisie lâchée dans l'outrance.”<sup>1</sup> Innocent of fancies their successors for the most part were, but *l'outrance* was their besetting sin, for, as Professor Saintsbury remarks, even their pictures of normal contemporary life “have the distortion of a spoon-reflexion.” At most times, however, they went in definite search of the rare and the abnormal in real life. “L'étude de l'exception, tel est le propre du romantisme,” says Brunetière ; and his remark, made as it is without qualification, might equally well be applied to the realists and naturalists of the second half of the century. For these latter only differed from the Romantics in so far that when they sought the rare in past civilizations or in distant lands, they took far more pains to be perfectly accurate than their predecessors in this field had done, and that when they sought it in contemporary France they had a predilection for physical, mental, and moral abnormality—pathological cases, in fact, which could be scientifically examined and explained.

Certain French critics have regarded the realist and naturalist movement as in some sort a return to classicism

<sup>1</sup> *La Naturalisme au Théâtre*, p. 7.



after the excesses of romanticism, but the foregoing considerations should have made it clear that, <sup>Classicism, romanticism, and realism</sup> despite its reactionary elements, the new movement was far more closely allied to the school of 1830 than to the school of 1660. The literature of the great classical age may roughly be said to have been written by men who were in sympathy with their time, and who took as their province average psychological truth in its most universal aspect, expressing and representing it with great moderation and economy of means. These writers conformed to a definite standard of taste, which, with regard to form, prescribed certain inviolable rules, and, with regard to content and treatment, forbade an overflow of individuality, imagination, or feeling.

The literature of the romantic and realist ages, on the other hand, was written by men who were out of sympathy with the world in which they lived. Though in theory they aimed at taking all life as their province, in practice they concentrated on external rather than on psychological reality, and within that domain preferred what was above or below the average; the exceptionally grand or fine expressed and represented with lavishness (romantics); the exceptionally strange, or base expressed and represented in its minutest detail (realists and naturalists). The writers of neither of these later schools admitted any inviolable standard of taste, save that dictated by the artistic conscience of each individual writer, but while the romantics gave full rein to imagination and feeling, the realists and naturalists made a serious effort—though not always a successful one—to curb both in the interests of impartial observation.

Thus while the difference between romanticism and classicism is one of kind, that between romanticism and the realism which flourished in France after 1850 was one of degree, and the transformation was wrought by a mere change in the quality and proportion of their common elements.



## CHAPTER III

### GENERAL PROSE AFTER 1850

#### POSITIVISM IN THOUGHT—HISTORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

AS we draw nearer to the contemporary age, we find in the domain of general prose more and more books written by experts for experts, books which do not properly belong to the literary domain at all, though many of them have an indirect bearing on literature because they influenced the general movement of ideas. During the period we are now studying there were three great writers of general prose who were exceptions to this rule, Renan, Taine, and Sainte-Beuve in his later years. These three men, imbued in varying degrees with the spirit of positivism, re-established in their works that combination of scholarship and literary art which had been one of the characteristics of Renaissance literature, while two of them, Taine and Renan, provided the France of the sixties, seventies, and eighties with most of her general ideas.

Ernest Renan (1823-1892), philosopher, historian, and philologist, was born of a clan of fishermen and farmers in the small but ancient cathedral town of Tréguier, in Brittany. A pure Breton on his father's side, he inherited a Gascon strain from his mother, whose paternal ancestors came from Bordeaux, and Renan himself always attributed the contradictions in his own temperament and tastes to the conflict in his nature between the sceptical, indulgent, light-hearted Gascon and the pensive, dreamy, idealistic Celt. Fatherless at the age of

five, the boy grew up between his simple-minded mother, whom he adored, and his sister Henriette, twelve years his senior, and "dont la haute raison était . . . comme la colonne lumineuse qui marchait devant moi."<sup>1</sup> In 1838 Renan, having carried off all the prizes in his class at the seminary of Tréguier, where he received his early education, consisting mainly of a good grounding in Latin, mathematics, and the inculcation of "l'amour de la vérité, le respect de la raison, le sérieux de la vie,"<sup>1</sup> was given a scholarship at the newly founded ecclesiastical college of Saint-Nicholas du Chardonnet. Here he received a good training in the humanities, and discovered, to his surprise, that learning was to be found outside clerical circles, that antiquity and the Catholic Church by no means exhausted the possible subjects of study, and that there was such a thing as contemporary literature.

"La mort de Louis XIV ne fut plus pour moi la fin du monde. Des idées, des sentiments m'apparurent, qui n'avaient eu d'expression ni dans l'antiquité ni au xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle."<sup>1</sup>

In 1840 Renan was sent to the seminary at Issy, a suburban branch of Saint-Sulpice, for a two years' course in philosophy as a preparation for the study of theology. By the time he left Issy for his theological training at Saint-Sulpice de Paris, he had not only assimilated Malebranche, Locke, Leibniz, Descartes, Reid, and Stewart, but had gained some preliminary acquaintance with the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and Herder, and these metaphysical studies, though at the time he was scarcely conscious of it, had awakened in his mind certain doubts as to the truth of Catholicism. His subsequent studies of Hebrew and biblical exegesis at Saint-Sulpice completely unsettled his mind, and in 1845, having lost all faith in the historical and theological basis, not only of Catholicism, but of Christianity itself, he quitted the seminary and gave up all idea of the priesthood. To secure the means of continuing his

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse.*

university studies, Renan took a post in a boarding-school for boys, the Pension Crouzet, where he received board and lodging in return for a few hours' teaching each day. Among his pupils was the future chemist, Marcellin Berthelot, then a boy of eighteen. The two immediately struck up what was to be a lifelong friendship based on a common intellectual eagerness and on a common desire to work and devote themselves on their respective lines to the service of truth. It was Berthelot who gave Renan his first serious interest in the natural sciences, to which already at Issy he had felt drawn, and which in later life he regretted not having studied exclusively instead of history and philology, "petites sciences conjecturales qui se défont sans cesse après s'être faites, et qu'on négligera dans cent ans." In 1847 Renan took his degree in philosophy—and the gradual development of his own ideas under the influence of Cousin and of

*Cahiers de  
Jeunesse*  
(1845-1846)

the German philosophers, Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and Herder, may be traced in the kind of intimate journal which he kept during the years 1845 and 1846, and which was published after his death in two volumes bearing the titles *Cahiers de Jeunesse* and *Nouveaux Cahiers de Jeunesse*.

*L'Avenir de la  
Science*  
(1849)

The Revolution of 1848 first brought Renan face to face with the problems of democracy, and during the first few months of 1849 he wrote a long work, which was not published until 1890. *L'Avenir de la Science* may be regarded as both his first and last profession of faith, for when he finally gave it to the world in 1890, in its original form, he accompanied it with a preface, in which he points out how little in essentials his views had changed since he wrote it, and how many of them had since been justified.

"J'eus donc raison, au début de ma carrière intellectuelle, de croire fermement à la science et de la prendre comme but de ma vie. Si j'étais à recommencer, je referais ce que j'ai fait, et, pendant le peu de temps qui me reste à vivre, je continuerai."

The gist of the book, which suffers from a youthful over-

emphasis, is to the effect that science will be the religion of the future—

“ La science ne vaut qu'autant qu'elle peut remplacer la religion,”  
and science can replace it because—

“ Elle restera toujours la satisfaction du plus haut désir de notre nature, la curiosité ; elle fournira toujours à l'homme le seul moyen qu'il ait pour améliorer son sort.”

Renan's programme for the regeneration of humanity by means of an aristocracy of *savants* working for the advancement of knowledge and for its diffusion among the masses is the work of an intensely religious mind. “ Dans le temple de la science,” remarks Faguet, “ il transportait toutes les vertus religieuses et à la science il attribuait tous les caractères de la religion ; force moralisante, force gouvernante, certitude, infaillibilité ; et de la science il était le ministre passionné, impétueux, presque intolérant et presque extatique comme il avait voulu l'être de Dieu.”<sup>1</sup>

Renan had barely completed the manuscript of *L'Avenir de la Science* when he was sent by the French Government on a scientific mission to Italy, which once for all awakened his artistic perceptions. From Rome he wrote to Berthelot :

“ Je sais très bien, cher ami, et je m'en soucie peu, que la plupart des sentiments que j'éprouve en ce pays sont fondés sur une connaissance fautive de la réalité. Je m'en soucie peu, dis-je, car le sentiment a sa valeur indépendamment de la réalité de l'objet qui l'excuse.”

On his return to Paris, Renan settled down with his sister Henriette, obtained a small post at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and spent his evenings writing for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Débats* those delightful essays which first made him known to cultured readers, and which were in 1857 and 1859 collected under the titles *Essais d'Histoire religieuse* and *Essais de Morale et de Critique*.

*Essais de  
Morale et de  
Critique  
(1859)*

In 1860 he was again sent on an archæological mission—this time to Phœnicia. Henriette, who accompanied him, died of intermittent fever in Syria the following autumn, and Renan returned

Faguet : *Politiques et Moralistes*, III, 1900.

to France, himself for the time being broken in health. In January, 1862, some comfort came to him through the realization of his dearest dream: his appointment to the Chair of Hebrew at the Collège de France. But he was destined to stand before his audience only once. In his inaugural lecture, a reference to Christ as "an incomparable man" raised such a storm that his course was suspended, and he did not return to his chair until after the fall of the Empire.

Henceforward he depended on his pen for a livelihood.

While in the East he had visited Palestine, and there already, on Henriette's advice, had begun to write *La Vie de Jésus*, with only a Bible and a

*La Vie de  
Jésus  
(1863)*

Josephus for reference. His mind, however, was a storehouse of biblical learning and exegesis; he had just acquired a thorough acquaintance with the inscriptions, monuments, and landscapes of Syria. His imagination did the rest. The result, published in 1863, was a book which, though far from being perfect either as a work of art or as a work of scholarship, raised a great storm, and made its author celebrated throughout the Christian world. For the first time the life of Christ was treated as a human and historical biography. By orthodox believers the book was regarded as blasphemous, by many others as a "fifth gospel," more credible than the other four because it explained away the supernatural, but quite as edifying because it preserved all their moral teaching.

Renan himself remained unmoved throughout the controversy and deigned no explanations. He was deprived of his chair at the Collège de France, and henceforth devoted himself for many years to a great work, *Les Origines du Christianisme*, of which *La Vie de Jésus* had been the first instalment, and of which the others were *Les Apôtres* (1868), *Saint-Paul* (1869), *L'Antéchrist* (Nero) (1873), *Les Evangiles* (1877), *L'Eglise Chrétienne* (1879), *Marc-Aurèle* (1881).

At sixty years of age, having studied the evolution of Christianity from the birth of Christ to the death of Marcus

*Les Origines  
du Christian-  
isme  
(1863-1881)*



Aurelius, Renan proceeded to inquire into its remoter origins. The results are embodied in the five volumes of his *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* (1888–1892), which traces the evolution of the Jewish religion from the legendary period of the patriarchs to the coming of Christ.

It is thus as an interpreter of the periods covered by the Old and New Testaments that Renan's fame as an historian rests. Just as Michelet had "resurrected" the past history of France, so Renan resurrected the Eastern, the Greek, and the Roman worlds of the first three centuries of the Christian era—with greater accuracy, it is true, especially when he was on purely historical rather than on religious ground, and with less exuberance, but always allowing his imagination to play on the material he had so patiently and laboriously collected, for, according to him, scholarship is not sufficient for a reconstruction of the past—"les textes ont besoin de l'interprétation du goût . . . il faut les solliciter doucement." <sup>1</sup> Herein lies Renan's weakness on the scientific side. This would-be man of science had the mind of a positivist but the soul of an idealist and a poet, and this explains many of the inconsistencies of his attitude towards life, an attitude at once scientific and imaginative. An unbeliever in religious matters, he continues to love and admire all that Christianity stands for, and never fails to speak respectfully, even reverently, of Catholicism; though he held that outside the realm of facts there can be no certainty, yet he admits the value of symbols and dreams, which are a help, provided that they be regarded as no more than a provisional means of keeping man in touch with the ideal until such time as the religion of science shall be organized. His scientific conscience forbade him to draw conclusions, or at least to draw them in anything but a very tentative way.

"Toute phrase doit être accompagnée d'un *peut-être*. Je crois faire un usage suffisant de cette particule. Si on n'en trouve pas

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<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Jésus*, Préface.

assez, qu'on en suppose les marges semées à profusion, on aura alors la mesure exacte de ma pensée."

Yet he had the romantic love of legend, and refused to eliminate the legendary elements from his historical works, on the grounds that "le talent de l'historien consiste à faire un ensemble vrai avec des traits qui ne sont vrais qu'à demi." <sup>1</sup>

These inconsistencies, which might be multiplied, were clearly recognized by Renan himself, who, as he grew older, took an increasing delight in playing with the most varied ideas. "Je porte avec moi le parterre charmant de la variété de mes pensées." <sup>2</sup> To the many who were only interested in and influenced by the positivist side of Renan's teaching this was a source of irritation. It caused Zola to remark :

"M. Renan est un de ces poètes de l'idéal qui suivent les savants en traînant la jambe et en profitant de chaque halte pour cueillir des fleurs."

In a materialistic age, all honour to him for doing so, and for seeing, champion of science though he was, that there are problems in the realm of morals and ideals which are worth considering, even though they cannot be scientifically analysed or explained.

Some of his later works, notably the *Dialogues Philosophiques* (1876) and his *Drames Philosophiques* (1878-1886), are an expression of Renan's conviction that, as absolute truth eternally eludes us, it is well to regard all questions from many sides.

"La forme du dialogue est, dans l'état actuel de l'esprit humain, la seule qui, selon moi, puisse convenir à l'exposition des idées philosophiques. Les vérités de cet ordre ne doivent être ni directement niées, ni directement affirmées ; elles ne sauraient être l'objet de démonstration. Tout ce qu'on peut, c'est de les présenter par

<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Jésus*, Préface.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogues Philosophiques*.

leurs faces diverses, d'en montrer le fort, le faible, les équivalences. Tous les hauts problèmes de l'humanité sont dans ce cas." <sup>1</sup>

Renan might have taken Montaigne's "que scay-je" as his motto, not because he was sceptical, but because he believed that all religions are imperfect symbols of the ideal which from race to race, from age to age, keeps changing, and that each of these ideals has its share of truth and beauty.

Whatever may be thought of Renan's historical or philosophical views, his intellectual honesty and his large tolerance cannot be denied. As for his purely literary qualities, they are of the highest order. His wonderful portraits and descriptions, the grace and winning beauty of his style, make him one of the greatest prose-writers that France has ever produced. When he was approaching sixty, Renan wrote those delightful reminiscences of his childhood and early youth, *Les Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse* (1883), which are probably read more frequently than any of his other works, and which contain, among even more delightful things, their author's famous *Prière sur l'Acropole*. The book ends with a passage which is so characteristic of Renan that it is worth quoting in full:

"Le siècle ou j'ai vécu n'aura probablement pas été le plus grand, mais il sera tenu sans doute pour le plus amusant des siècles. . . . Je n'aurai en disant adieu à la vie qu'à remercier la cause de tout bien de la charmante promenade qu'il m'a été donné d'accomplir à travers la réalité."

Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) was born at Vouziers, in the Ardennes. After the death of his father in 1840, he was sent to school at the Collège de Bourbon, where he formed some lifelong friendships, notably one with Prévost-Paradol. After a brilliant school career, he proceeded, in 1848, to the Ecole Normale, the college of the University of Paris which supplies school-masters to the *lycées* and professors to the various faculties

*Le Prêtre de Nemi*, Préface.

of France. Taine was regarded as the most remarkable student of his year, and it was fully expected that his name would head the list when the results of the Agrégation de Philosophie came out. Instead of this, he failed, owing entirely to the expression of unorthodox views. Nevertheless, he was appointed as *locum tenens* to the Professor of Philosophy at the College of Nevers. Here he spent all his leisure pursuing his studies in psychology, reading Hegel, and planning a great work which was to occupy his mind for over twenty years—*De l'Intelligence*. After the *coup d'état* of December, 1851, the Minister of Education suppressed the examination in philosophy for the *agrégation*, thus dashing Taine's hopes of presenting himself for the examination again, and soon after he was transferred from Nevers to the College of Poitiers to act as substitute for the classical master there. In June, 1852, Taine's thesis on the sensations was rejected by the Sorbonne on account of its unorthodox tendencies, and he was informed that if he wished to get his doctor's degree, he had better present a literary thesis. In a spirit of irony, Taine determined to offer the most harmless literary subject he could think of, and the following summer obtained his doctor's degree with a thesis on La Fontaine's fables, which, as he worked at it, had inspired its author with his famous theory of race, moment, and environment, of which more anon.

Henceforward Taine devoted himself almost exclusively to literary work, and moved in a circle which comprised Michelet, Sainte-Beuve, Renan, Berthelot, Flaubert, Gavarni, and the Goncourts. In 1854 he broke down from over-work, and he was ordered a rest in the Pyrenees. The publisher Hachette asked him to use this opportunity for compiling a guide-book of that region. The resulting volume, *Voyage aux Pyrénées*, can never have been much use to any traveller, for it contains no exact information, but it is full of the wonderful descriptions and humorous sketches of local life which delight those who can only travel in imagination. Two years later appeared his *Philosophes français du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle en France*, a series of witty



and disrespectful studies attacking the principles underlying the philosophy of Cousin and his school, and sketching in conclusion a system for applying the methods of the exact sciences to research in psychology and metaphysics.

In 1858 Taine published a volume of *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, two further series appearing in 1865 and 1894. Since 1856 he had been working unceasingly at his *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, four volumes of which were published in 1864, and a fifth five years later. The same year Taine succeeded Viollet-le-Duc as Professor of the History of Art and Æsthetics at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, an appointment which gave him plenty of leisure for travel and research. The results of his academic lectures are embodied in four volumes on *La Philosophie de l'Art* (1865-1869), and his impressions of Italy, where he had travelled just before his appointment to the Beaux-Arts, were given in his *Voyage en Italie* (1866), a companion volume to the *Voyage aux Pyrénées*.

In 1868 Taine collected some articles on Parisian life and society which he had contributed to *La Vie Parisienne*, and published them under the title *Notes sur Paris: Vie et Opinions de Thomas Frédéric Graindorge*, a book which contains a more personal expression of opinion than any of his other writings. The publication of Taine's great philosophical work, the *Théorie de l'Intelligence*, which had occupied him ever since his student days, fell in the same year as the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, which diverted his philosophical mind from literary and art criticism to history. In the spring of 1871 he delivered a course of lectures at Oxford, and his impressions of this and a previous visit to England are to be found in his *Notes sur l'Angleterre* (1872). Taine devoted the remaining twenty years of his life to analysing the origins of contemporary France and the causes that had made the recent course of events possible. He did not live to complete

*Origines de la  
France Con-  
temporaine  
(1876-1894)*

his *Origines de la France Contemporaine* (1876-1894), but before he died he had, by the help of original documents and his own acumen, shed a piti-



less light on the causes and results of the Revolution.

Varied as is the subject-matter of Taine's books, his work has great unity, because, whether his studies deal with psychology, art, literature, or history, they are all applications of his positivist and determinist philosophy. Taine believed, like Condillac, that we can know nothing exactly except what we apprehend through our sense ; like Comte, that there is nothing real in the world except facts, and that intellectual and moral phenomena are governed by the same inflexible laws as those which reign in the physical world. This assimilation of the human to the animal world led Taine to apply certain biological laws to literary criticism and history.

In his thesis for the doctorate, later revised and published under the title *La Fontaine et ses Fables* (1860), in which he first sketched and applied his *race-milieu-moment* theory, he declares :

“ Ou peut considérer l'homme comme un animal d'une espèce supérieure, qui produit des philosophies et des poèmes à peu près comme les vers à soie font leurs cocons et comme les abeilles font leurs ruches.” <sup>1</sup>

Sainte-Beuve, as we shall see, had come to regard literature as “une histoire naturelle des esprits,” and from this point of view believed that the ancestry, environment, and temperament of men of letters could throw helpful sidelights on their work. But what in Sainte-Beuve's hands had been a flexible method, was formulated by Taine under the influence of his determinist philosophy as the *race-milieu-moment* problem, the solution of which was a mere question of elementary mechanics. The theory is fully worked out and explained in the introduction to his *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, where the method is very rigorously applied. A great writer is not an accident, but he and a literary age generally are the product of three main factors—the *race* to which he belongs, and from which he inherits certain innate tendencies and characteristics ; the *milieu*

<sup>1</sup> Préface.

or environment into which he is born, which comprises not only his social conditions, his friends and associates, and the general intellectual atmosphere of his immediate circle, but also the natural scenery and climatic conditions in which he moves and has his being ; finally, the *moment*, that is to say, the pressure exercised by the dominating tendencies in the society, culture, and thought of his time and country. And Taine concludes :

“ Il n'y a ici, comme partout, qu'un problème de mécanique : l'effet total est un composé déterminé tout entier par la grandeur et la direction des forces qui le produisent.”

To these three “ forces primordiales,” as he calls them, he adds a fourth, *la faculté maîtresse*, the ruling faculty or salient characteristic which he believes is to be found in every great man, subordinating all others to it and directing all its owner's energies into one particular channel.

Taine's theory of la faculté maîtresse If not too rigorously applied, Taine's methods of literary criticism may throw much interesting light on specific literary ages and on specific literary men. To apply them rigidly, even in cases where their use is justified, or to use them at all in others, may lead the critic, as it sometimes led Taine, to a considerable forcing of facts, as when, for instance, the latter deduced the national characteristics of the English, and consequently their literature, from a damp and foggy climate. As M. Lanson remarks : “ Cette forte doctrine a le défaut de tout expliquer,”—individuality, for instance, and particularly the highest form of individuality—genius. When all that can be explained has been explained, there remains in every artist what Sainte-Beuve calls “ le vif de l'homme,” and in his work an inexplicable residue which can be appreciated, even analysed, but upon which even the presence of a *faculté maîtresse*, if he happens to have one, can shed no light.

This same determinist method was applied by Taine to history, of which, indeed, as has often been remarked, his

form of literary criticism was but a branch, for he was mainly interested in men of letters as specimens or products of their time. When, after the Franco-Prussian War, he turned to history proper, it was with the object of explaining contemporary France by a study of the *ancien régime*. As he once explained in a letter to a friend: "Mon but n'est pas l'histoire narrative, mais l'exposé des forces qui produisent les événements."

In his *Origines de la France Contemporaine*, a trilogy of which the last part remained unfinished, Taine proves, by means of a wealth of small but significant and illuminating facts, that the Revolution was the natural consequence of two centuries of French history, and that it neither destroyed nor created despotism, but only gave it a new form. The study of the Revolution itself gave Taine ample scope for illustrating and justifying one of his favourite theories, namely, that under a thin veneer of civilization man is still little more than a ferocious gorilla led by his instincts, or else a maniac driven by his hallucinations and his dreams. "Mon livre sera une consultation de médecin," Taine had written to M. Havet, soon after embarking on the second volume of his history, and indeed his fundamental pessimism made him something of a pathologist.

Taine has been called a "poète-logicien." Even this brief summary of his work will have sufficed to show that logic was his leading mental characteristic; but that he was an artist as well as a logician one has only to open any of his books at almost any page to see. His history is full of detailed and yet concentrated portraits and of dramatic little scenes, while the descriptions contained in his travel books are justly famous. His general style, for all its logic and clarity, is very picturesque, at times oratorical, always vigorous.

The influence of Taine on his own contemporaries and immediate successors can scarcely be over-estimated. He has been called the theorist of realism, not because he originated realism, but because, by summing up a new tendency in thought which fitted in

Taine as a  
literary artist

His influence

with changes which were taking place in art and literature, he, as it were, justified and strengthened the new movement. It was Taine who, by laying stress on the documentary value of literature, encouraged the idea of producing such documents for the benefit of future ages; Taine who had said :

“ Si le roman s'emploie à montrer ce que nous sommes, la critique s'emploie à montrer ce que nous avons été. L'un et l'autre sont maintenant une grande enquête sur l'homme, sur toutes les variétés, toutes les situations, toutes les floraisons, toutes les dégénérescences de la nature humaine. Par leur sérieux, par leur méthode, par leur exactitude rigoureuse, par leurs avenir et leurs espérances, tous deux se rapprochent de la science.”<sup>1</sup>

As for Zola's naturalism, it was a mere transposition of Taine's theories of heredity and environment.

Sainte-Beuve's principal work after 1848 consisted in the completion of his *Histoire de Port-Royal* (1860),  
SAINT-BEUVE  
(after 1848) in editing his Liège lectures, *Chateaubriand et son Groupe Littéraire sous l'Empire* (1860), and in contributing successively to *Le Constitutionnel*, *Le Moniteur*, and *Le Temps*, those weekly “feuilletons littéraires” which form the content of his two series of essays *Les Causeries du Lundi* (15 vols., 1851–1862) and *Les Nouveaux Lundis* (13 vols., 1863–1870).  
Les Lundis  
(1851–1870) Except during the few years that he held the post of lecturer in French literature at the Ecole Normale (1858–1862), when his contributions were not quite continuous, Sainte-Beuve produced an article every Monday for a period of twenty years—i.e. from 1849 to his death; and the reading and research they involved must have meant the better part of a week's work. Militant romantic though he had been at the outset of his career, Sainte-Beuve had shown, even in his earlier excursions into literary criticism, in spite of a certain violence in his loves and hates, much of the soberness, taste, and sense of reality which are the distinguishing marks of his criticism after 1848.

<sup>1</sup> *Débats*, Jan. 26, 1865, quoted by G. Giraud: *Essai sur Taine*.



"Ce que j'ai voulu en critique," he writes at the end of his *Portraits Littéraires*, "ça a été d'y introduire une sorte de charme et en même temps plus de réalité, qu'on n'en mettait auparavant, en un mot de la poésie tout à la fois et quelque physiologie."<sup>1</sup>

That Sainte-Beuve has a supreme gift of charm, one has only to read any one of his *Lundis* to see, to say nothing of the delightful *Port-Royal*, in which he carries the reader on from volume to volume by his fascinating treatment of an already fascinating subject. His gift of reviving the atmosphere of a past age, as shown in *Port-Royal*, and in a hundred other studies on a much smaller scale; his capacity for understanding and admiring and for making his readers do the same; and the ease with which he now identifies himself with his subject, now detaches himself from it, all help to make Sainte-Beuve the delightful and stimulating critic he undoubtedly is. As for the "reality" at which he aimed, again with success, it lies at the very root of his conception of the art of criticism. Protesting in a letter to Duruy against Victor Cousin's motto, "Le vrai, le beau, le bien," he wrote: "Si j'avais une devise, ce serait le *vrai*, le *vrai* seul. Et que le *beau* et le *bien* s'en tirent comme ils peuvent." Truth, indeed, was what he sought—not abstract truth, but the truth which can be observed and verified; and even so, he was always conscious that it was relative and not absolute. In the endeavour to give an accurate representation of this kind of truth—in the interests of realism, in fact—Sainte-Beuve would spend hours verifying the significant small facts out of which he built up his conception of the man behind the book, for every literary work was for him the expression of a temperament.

"Ma curiosité, mon désir de tout voir, de tout regarder de près, mon extrême plaisir à trouver le vrai relatif de chaque chose et de chaque organisation m'entraînaient à une série d'expériences qui n'ont été pour moi qu'un long cours de *physiologie morale*."

<sup>1</sup> *Portraits Littéraires*, iii, p. 546.



Sainte-Beuve's critical method was eminently biographical and psychological, though he himself, under the influence of the pseudo-scientific pretensions of the literary age, and more particularly of Taine, preferred to call it physiological or anatomical. In another passage he speaks of the possibility of literary history becoming "une histoire naturelle des esprits," and believes that his short monographs might serve as materials for such a study. He thus advocated the application of scientific method in literary criticism, though not without reservations :

"La critique littéraire ne saurait devenir une science positive ; elle restera un art, et un art très délicat dans la main de ceux qui sauront s'en servir ; mais cet art profitera et a déjà profité de toutes les inductions de la science et de toutes les acquisitions de l'histoire." <sup>1</sup>

✓ And with Sainte-Beuve criticism always remained an art. His wide sympathies and catholic taste, and his dislike of systems and formulas of any kind, made him equally opposed to the æsthetic dogmatism of Nisard and the scientific dogmatism of Taine. Sainte-Beuve had a method, though he never stereotyped it or allowed himself to become a slave to it. It consisted in placing an author in his age and surroundings, and in endeavouring to show their influence on him and his work.<sup>2</sup> He had, too, a rough general scheme for his essays which lent itself admirably to his desultory manner, and enabled him, without pedantry, to give his readers the benefit of his great learning. He generally approaches his subject along a winding path leading up to a biographical sketch, in which due reference is made to ancestry, environment, tasks, habits, ideas, and literary influences. Then follows some account of the author's work or works, with more quotation than was usual in Sainte-

<sup>1</sup> *Nouveaux Lundis*, ix, *Physiologie des Ecrivains*.

<sup>2</sup> For Sainte-Beuve's own account of his method, cf. *Nouveaux Lundis*, iii, *Chateaubriand*, reprinted in Mr. Tilley's *Selections from Sainte-Beuve* (Camb. Univ. Press.)

Beuve's day. The essay, as a rule, concludes with some illuminating or suggestive sentence, in which he rarely attempts to formulate any direct or absolute conclusion, but throws out a tentative and comparative estimate.

Sainte-Beuve's *Portraits Critiques et Littéraires*, *Portraits Contemporains*, *Lundis*, and *Nouveaux Lundis* between them cover the whole ground of French literature from the Middle Ages down to and inclusive of his own time, with infrequent excursions into the literature of foreign lands and of classical antiquity, and with very frequent dallyings with interesting people who have little or no claim to be regarded as literary men at all. By the insight and sympathy which inform them, by their human interest, by the lucid and elusive grace of their style and treatment, the essays of Sainte-Beuve belong to creative literature as the work of no other French critic does.

Sainte-Beuve has been placed here after Renan and Taine, in spite of the fact that they were his juniors by twenty and twenty-five years respectively, and admittedly his literary disciples, because from about 1860 onwards the disciples, and more particularly Taine, in their turn influenced the master. Indeed, for a time he acted as a kind of interpreter and critic between them and the general public.

The Goncourts, not without malice, define Sainte-Beuve's rôle in connection with the realist movement as follows :

" Sainte-Beuve est pour ainsi dire hygrométrique littérairement ; il marque les idées régnantes en littérature, à la façon dont le capucin marque le temps dans un baromètre." <sup>1</sup>

But he did more than this. Apart from what may be called the realism of his own critical method, Sainte-Beuve justified the realist movement by writing frequently and sympathetically of its leading representatives. This former herald of romanticism became, shortly after the appearance of *Madame Bovary*

Sainte-Beuve's  
connection with  
the realist  
movement

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, iii, p. 68.

(1857), the upholder of realism, and in 1865 refused to write a report on the present state of French literature for the Government, on the grounds that it would expect a panegyric of literary tradition, which he could not conscientiously undertake.

“Prétendre étudier la littérature actuelle au point de vue de la *tradition*, c’est l’éliminer presque tout entière. C’est en retrancher l’élément le plus actuel, le plus vital, celui qui lui fera peut-être le plus d’honneur dans l’avenir.”<sup>1</sup>

As for Sainte-Beuve’s influence on the evolution of literary criticism, it has been truly said that all his successors have a family resemblance because “ils ne battent Sainte-Beuve que sur le terrain qu’il a conquis.”<sup>2</sup> His method was, as we have seen, flexible and comprehensive. Later critics borrowed now this, now that from it, sometimes second-hand through Taine, developing and systematizing the elements which suited them best.

Emile Montégut (1826–1895), for many years chief literary critic of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, follows the method of Sainte-Beuve more closely than anyone else, applying it mainly, though not solely, to the criticism of foreign, and more especially English, literature. The penetrating and sympathetic studies contained in his *Essais sur la Littérature Anglaise* (1883), and his *Ecrivains Modernes de l’Angleterre* (three vols., 1885–1892), supplemented Taine’s *History of English Literature*, aroused an interest in the Victorians, and thus helped to prepare the way for their influence on the later development of French literature.

The same may be said of Edmond Schérer’s *Etudes Critiques sur la Littérature Contemporaine* (ten vols., 1863–1895). Schérer was of Swiss and English extraction, and though by his birth he belonged to the generation of Sainte-Beuve, he did not take

<sup>1</sup> Lettre M. Duruy, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> Turquet: Introduction to *Profilis Anglais* (Dent).

up literary criticism until he was forty-five, by which time he had very definite philosophical and moral ideas, and these too often prejudice his literary conclusions.

A more readable critic than either Schérer or Montégut is Emile Faguet (1847-1916), who, like Sainte-Beuve, not only disliked all theories, formulas, and systems, but forbore to draw definite conclusions, holding—though even he was not without his prejudices—that it was the critic's duty to have a wide and sympathetic understanding of many things, and act as interpreter between the author and his public. Every student of French literature will have referred at some time or another to the four volumes of his suggestive *Études*, which deal with the chief figures of the last four centuries of French literature. In these studies Faguet, like Sainte-Beuve, though in a less desultory and artistic fashion, after giving a brief biographical sketch of each author, deals successively with his character and mentality, his general and literary ideas, and finally with his artistic qualities. Faguet wrote many other literary essays and monographs, but, like Schérer, his favourite hunting ground was among the ideas, general, philosophical, or political, of literary men, and he is consequently seen at his best in the penetrating and witty *Politiques et Moralistes du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (three vols., 1891, 1898, 1900), and in the charming literary excursions of his later years—*En lisant les beaux vieux livres* (1911), *En lisant Corneille* (1913), *En lisant Molière* (1914). These three books are *explications de textes* in the best French manner—that is to say, conversational commentaries on passages from well-known works, analysing the author's thought, style, and composition.

The last two critics of this group, Bourget and Brunetière, took as their starting-point the system which Taine had extracted from Sainte-Beuve's practice, and developed it on their own lines.

Paul Bourget (b. 1852), chiefly known as a novelist, in his three series of *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* (1883-1886), adopted as his motto of criticism Taine's remark



that "la littérature est une psychologie vivante," and aimed, to use his own phrase, at putting together "quelques notes capables de servir à l'historien de la vie morale pendant la deuxième moitié du xix<sup>e</sup> siècle." With the patient care of an experimental psychologist he investigated the mental and moral qualities of those writers whom he regarded as particularly representative of their age—Stendhal, Taine, Renan, Baudelaire, etc.—and endeavoured to gauge how far each of them was responsible for the pessimism prevalent in the intellectual circles of the eighties.

The most influential and, after Taine, the most dogmatic French critic of the end of last century was

Ferdinand Brunetière (1849–1906), *maître de conférence* at the Ecole Normale, and from 1893 to his death chief editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

Ferdinand  
Brunetière  
(1849–1906)

Both as a critic and as a literary historian he adopted a system which is a curious blend of the æsthetic dogmatism of Nisard, the scientific dogmatism of Taine, and the historical method of Sainte-Beuve with a dash of the moral attitude of Schérer. A great believer in certain constant and universal tendencies in the human mind, and hence in the authority of tradition and discipline, Brunetière accepts, though with some latitude, the standard of taste set up during the great classical age. Hence his dislike of individualism in literature and of the eccentric or abnormal.

"Il s'agit de savoir dans quelle mesure et dans quel sens les écrivains ont modifié ce que l'on pensait avant eux sur les intérêts les plus généraux de l'humanité."

In obedience to this principle, Brunetière pays more attention to the philosophy and ethics than to the æsthetics of literature, and devotes himself more particularly to the literary men who have had an influence on posterity, with the result that his judgments are far from being impartial. Again, his moral bias made him an equally violent opponent of art for art's sake and of contemporary realism, since



both schools declared that there can be no such thing as immorality in art.

Brunetière, who had scientific tastes, and was a reader and admirer of Comte, Darwin, Spencer, and Haeckel, after winning fame as a critic with his *Roman Naturaliste* and the early series of his *Etudes Critiques*, proceeded to make his name as a literary historian by applying the theory of evolution to the history of literary forms. In *L'Evolution des Genres dans la Littérature française* (1890), *Les Epoques du Théâtre français* (1892), and *L'Evolution de la Poésie lyrique au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (1894), Brunetière shows how, under the changing influences of *milieu* and *moment*, a literary form arises, develops, reaches a high point of perfection, then declines and dies, or, more correctly, is in the struggle for life absorbed by another. The evolutionary idea, which he was apt to apply too rigidly when dealing with any particular literary form, proved eminently fruitful and suggestive in his later *Manuel de la Littérature française* and his *Histoire de la Littérature française classique*, for it led their author to lay stress on various factors in literary history which hitherto had only been dealt with singly, when they had been dealt with at all—i.e. the study of tendencies and movements, and the consequent importance of transitional periods; the influence of one work, native or foreign, upon another; and the connection of any individual work with the literary kind to which it belongs. At the same time, Brunetière, like Sainte-Beuve, and unlike Taine, endeavours to bring out the original genius or talent of each individual writer. ✓

Brunetière's chief adversaries in the critical realm were Jules Lemaître and Anatole France, who were born "impressionists," interested solely in their own adventures among books, and convinced that it is impossible to judge any work of art impersonally.

Jules Lemaître (1853-1914), who has been regarded as the founder of impressionist criticism, was also a poet, dramatist, and novelist; but it is as a literary critic that he is best known. Succes-

Impressionist  
critics

Jules Lemaître  
(1853-1914)

sively dramatic critic to the *Journal des Débats* and literary critic to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he later collected the *feuilletons* and articles which he had contributed to these papers under the titles of *Les Contemporains* (seven series, 1886-1899) and *Impressions de Théâtre* (ten series, 1888-1898). Jules Lemaître was a keen analyst of catholic tastes, whose very inconsistencies are suggestive. He combined, to a degree unusual in a French critic, whole-hearted admiration for the great classical writers,<sup>1</sup> with a no less great appreciation for the literary art of the second half of the nineteenth century. His studies are little masterpieces, in which acuteness of judgment and delicate irony go hand in hand. "Ne pas plaire à ce critique," remarks M. Canat, "est un mauvais signe."

Anatole France, the novelist, is also a critic of the impressionist school. *La Vie Littéraire* (four vols., 1888-1892) and *Le Génie Latin* (1913) are the literary conversations of a man of taste, quick to discover beauty wherever it lies hidden, though with a decided preference for the classical ideal. No one has said more penetrating or appreciative things about Racine, La Fontaine, Lamartine, and Musset than this master of irony, who refuses to regard any judgment as final, and who goes so far as to say :

" Il faut que le critique se pénètre bien de cette idée que tout livre a d'autant d'exemplaires différents qu'il a de lecteurs, et qu'un poème, un paysage, se transforme dans tous les yeux qui le voient, dans toutes les âmes qui le conçoivent."<sup>2</sup>

The last important critic who made his name during the closing years of the nineteenth century was Rémy de Gourmont (1858-1915), a descendant on his mother's side of the poet Malherbe. An individualist, hating above all things pretence, imitation, and mediocrity, and an aristocrat both by birth and by temperament, Rémy de Gourmont was the chief

The theorist  
of symbolism,  
Rémy de  
Gourmont  
(1858-1915)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his excellent monograph on Racine.

<sup>2</sup> *La Vie Littéraire*, vol. ii, Preface.

theorist of the symbolist school, to whose ideas and subtleties he alone succeeded in giving a clear and condensed exposition. No one had a greater aptitude for discovering the literary merit of his contemporaries, or, as he himself puts it, for seeking out "l'éternel dans la diversité momentanée des formes," than this prophet of Mallarmé, Huysmans, Maeterlinck, etc., as may be seen in his contributions to the *Mercure de France*, later collected as *Promenades Littéraires* (five series, 1904-1913) and *Le Livre des Masques* (two series, 1896-1898). Nor has anyone so well explained the idealism which lies at the root of the symbolist movement (*L'Idealisme*, 1893).

At the turn of the century Rémy de Gourmont directed his critical energies to the French language (*Esthétique de la Langue Française*, 1899; *Le Problème du Style*, 1902), and to the literature of ideas (*La Culture des Idées*, 1900; *Promenades Philosophiques*, three series, 1905-1909). *Le Chemin de Velours* (1902), perhaps his most characteristic work, is an ironical comparison between the Jesuit and the Jansenist system of morals, and should itself be compared with Pascal's and Saint-Evremond's views on the subject. Subtle, witty, and paradoxical, Rémy de Gourmont served both reason and intuition at a time when the two were at daggers drawn, and his reputation as a critic is likely to grow, rather than to decrease, with time.

The roll of French critics during the nineteenth century is indeed an honourable one. Lack of space has necessitated the omission of many names which in any other country but France—so splendidly gifted in this direction—would, on their own merits, have an important place in the national annals of criticism.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NOVEL AND THE SHORT STORY

IN the second half of the nineteenth century the novel, which had made enormous strides during the romantic period, superseded lyrical poetry as the dominant form of literature, and tended to absorb all other literary kinds. After 1850 the historical romance, the novel of adventure, and the psychological novel of sentiment lost their vogue, and for some thirty years the prevalent type of prose fiction was the realistic novel of contemporary life.

The first great triumph of the realistic movement, which, as has been shown, had long been gradually developing in the highways and byways of literature, and for which Stendhal and Balzac had created a taste without entirely satisfying it, dates from the publication, in 1857, of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, in which the penetrating observation of a Balzac is blended with the artistic sense of a Mérimée or a Gautier.

Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), the son of a Norman surgeon, was born and educated at Rouen. From his earliest childhood he had a passion for literature. Before he was ten years old he had planned a series of novels and plays and decided upon their titles, and at the same early age he was poring over the pages of Byron and *Werther* in French translations. A few years later he was devouring Balzac and busy with youthful productions of his own. In 1840 his father sent

Artistic  
Realism

GUSTAVE  
FLAUBERT  
(1821-1880)



him to Paris to study law, and towards the close of the same year he spent a holiday in the Pyrenees and in Corsica. After five years of desultory study, Flaubert left Paris, for which capital he had little liking, abandoned his legal studies, for which he had less, and returned to Normandy to live with his mother, who within a few months had lost her husband and her daughter Caroline. Mother and son settled down at Croisset, near Rouen, in an old country house overlooking the Seine, where all Flaubert's novels were conceived and written. He never married, and the only sentimental episode of any importance in his life was his friendship between 1846 and 1854—largely epistolary—with a now-forgotten poetess, Louise Colet. The chief friend of Flaubert's early manhood was Maxime du Camp, with whom, in 1846, he travelled in Brittany, and in whose company, in 1849, he made a tour in the East, visiting Malta, Egypt, Palestine, Constantinople, Athens, and other parts of Greece. This Eastern tour made a deep impression on his imagination, and may be regarded as the central event of his life.

From 1850 Flaubert's biography resolves itself into the history of his literary productions—five novels and three short tales—the fruits of earlier observation and of laborious nights and days spent within the four walls of his study. Henceforward he rarely stirred from Croisset, save for infrequent visits to Paris, where he consorted with Sainte-Beuve, Théophile Gautier, and the Russian novelist, Turgeniev, and later also with George Sand, Alphonse Daudet, Renan, Taine, the Goncourts, and Emile Zola. In 1858 he made another journey to the East, this time to Tunis and Carthage, with the express purpose of collecting material for *Salammbô*, the archæological novel upon which he was then engaged, and which appeared in 1862. It had been preceded by *Madame Bovary*, his first published work and his masterpiece, to which he had devoted seven years of unremitting labour, and which originally appeared as a serial in the *Revue de Paris* of 1857. Another seven years went to the writing of the final version of *L'Education*



*Sentimentale* (1869), his second novel of manners, and many more to *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine* (1874), the first draft of which dates from 1849. The last years of Flaubert's life were devoted to the composition of the *Trois Contes* (1877), and to that of a third novel of manners, the unfinished *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, published posthumously in 1881. Prematurely aged by the strenuous life to which his artistic conscience subjected him, and gravely affected in health by the national misfortunes of 1870, Flaubert was carried off by a stroke of apoplexy in his fifty-ninth year.

"Il y a en moi deux bonshommes distincts," wrote Flaubert to Louise Colet in 1852, "un qui est épris de *guculades*, de lyrisme, de grands vols d'aigle, de toutes les sonorités de la phrase et des sommets de l'idée; un autre qui creuse et qui fouille le vrai tant qu'il peut, qui aime à accuser le petit fait aussi puissamment que le grand, qui voudrait vous faire sentir presque matériellement les choses qu'il reproduit."<sup>1</sup>

In his *Correspondance*, from which this passage is taken, Flaubert constantly refers to these conflicting elements in his tastes and temperament. It has been truly said of him that imagination was his muse and reality his conscience, and one might add that he invariably allowed his conscience to discipline his muse—and this in her own interests, for Flaubert was endowed with an imagination so rich and vigorous that no amount of lopping and pruning could impoverish it. It has become a commonplace of literary criticism to remark of him, as of Balzac, that he was a romantic and a realist in almost equal proportions, but in Flaubert's case this duality was welded into a perfect oneness.

That Flaubert was a romantic by temperament one can see at once from his delightful letters, to say nothing of his recently published *Œuvres de Jeunesse*, the very titles of which are illuminating

1. Romantic traits

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance*, ii, p. 69 (Charpentier, 1902).

in this respect—*Les Mémoires d'un Fou*, *Le Chant de la Mort*, *Le Rêve d'Enfer*, etc. To the end of his

(1) His literary tastes life, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, and Théophile Gautier were among his chief literary gods.

Of his brother realists, with whom he strongly objected to being classed, he had no liking for Stendhal, he despised Champfleury, and even Balzac was dismissed as "un immense bonhomme mais de second ordre," and this because he lacked that perfection of form and style which, in Flaubert's view, was the be-all and end-all of literature. For the same reason, though he admired their force and originality, he was never a whole-hearted admirer of the Goncourts or Zola.

Like most of the writers of his age and country, Flaubert inherited the romantic contempt of the bourgeois and of their conventional attitude towards all things in heaven and on earth, though he did not merely apply the epithet "bourgeois" to one social class—"J'appelle bourgeois quiconque pense basement"—that is to say, the vast majority of his fellow-men, for, to use his own words,

(2) His contempt for the bourgeois

"la foule sera toujours haïssable. Il n'y a d'important qu'un petit groupe d'esprits, toujours les mêmes, et qui se repassent le flambeau."<sup>1</sup>

In his very early youth Flaubert and his friends created a mysterious symbolical phantom, *Le Garçon*, who was a compound "de toutes les bêtises bourgeoises," and somewhat later Flaubert planned a *Dictionnaire des Idées reçues*, to which he more than once refers in his *Correspondance*, and which was to be a collection of truisms and platitudes culled from conversations between members of that hated race. Indeed, with Flaubert, contempt for the bourgeois amounted to an obsession, and one has the impression that he sought them out and studied them in order to hate them more.

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance*, iv, p. 73.

Lastly, more than any of his contemporaries, except Leconte de Lisle, Flaubert had the romantic passion for the splendid, the violent, the barbaric. <sup>(3) His love of the splendid, the violent, the barbaric</sup> "J'ai la vie ordinaire en exécration," he once wrote. Hence his imaginative escapes from the environments he described in *Madame Bovary*, *L'Education Sentimentale*, *Un Cœur Simple*, and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, into times and countries where splendour and violence were an everyday reality (*Salammbô*, *Hérodiade*, *La Légende de Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier*, *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*).

On the other hand, Flaubert's romantic tendencies were held in check by his whole conception of art, <sup>2. Flaubert's realism</sup> and by a certain positive and scientific turn of mind, which he owed, perhaps, not only to the influence of his age, but also to that of his own environment: his father and brother were both medical men, and he himself was keenly interested in the study of physiology and medicine. According to Flaubert, art being an end in itself, and not a means to something else, its creator must avoid playing the rôle of philanthropist, moralist, or philosopher, and confine himself, without drawing conclusions, to representing, not his own errors, illusions, or dreams, but objective external truth, and to clothing it in the most perfect form possible, or, as he so much more succinctly puts it, to "la recherche incessante du vrai rendu par le beau."

To no æsthetic question does Flaubert return so frequently in his *Correspondance* as to the importance of a completely detached and disinterested attitude on the part of the literary artist:

"L'artiste doit d'arranger de façon à faire croire à la postérité qu'il n'a pas vécu."<sup>1</sup>

On this will depend his power to see truth, and to see it whole.

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance*, iii, p. 86.

“Quand on ne regarde la vérité que de profil ou de trois quarts on la voit toujours mal, il y a peu de gens qui savent la contempler de face.”<sup>1</sup>

Flaubert practised what he preached. No writer ever took such pains to make the scenes and characters he painted true and exact in their minutest details. He was convinced that he ought to treat subjects with which, by experience, he was familiar. The very fact that he had no sympathy with what he knew best—the bourgeoisie—made it, in his view, an ideal subject for the display of detached artistic realism. Hence *Madame Bovary*, that extraordinarily vivid and veracious study of middle-class provincial manners, in which the heroine descends from weakness to vice and from vice to suicide, because, her head being filled with romantic nonsense, she is out of tune with her environment and finds no satisfaction in intercourse with her natural associates: the country doctor of limited intelligence, whom she has married, and the apothecary Homais, who is the very apotheosis of middle-class mediocrity. Hence also the first of the *Trois Contes*, *Un Cœur Simple*, the pathetic story of a country servant who sacrifices everything to her employers; and *L'Education Sentimentale*, the study of a weak and romantic youth Frédéric—a masculine Emma Bovary set against the moral, social, and political background of the Revolution of 1848. The last of this group, the unfinished *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which, as Faguet remarks, might well, in opposition to its predecessor, have borne the title *Education Intellectuelle*, is the story of two uneducated and stupid men who set out to acquire encyclopædic knowledge of both a practical and theoretical kind. They fail ignominiously, and when “tout leur a craqué dans la main,” they return to the office-stools from which they came.

Flaubert tells us that he read over fifteen hundred books on technical subjects before sitting down to write this dreary and depressing story, and this is typical of the

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance*, i, p. 179.



method he employed in writing his historical and legendary novels and tales. "Pour qu'un livre *sue* la vérité, il faut être bourré de son sujet jusque pardessus les oreilles," <sup>1</sup> he wrote when he was labouring with *Salammbô*, a romance of Carthage at the time of the mutiny of the mercenaries after the first Punic War. For this novel, as for *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*, and his two short stories, *Hérodias* and *La Légende de Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier*, Flaubert not only made minute researches in all the available original authorities, but also visited the places he wished to describe. The result is an unequalled realistic rendering of the strange barbaric past.

Flaubert owes his high place in French literature to his extraordinary visual imagination, to the stress he lays on what he himself calls "l'importance des petites choses dans le pays des petites gens," and to his impeccable style. No writer ever regarded his form and style with such passionate seriousness, or submitted it to such merciless criticism. An indefatigable seeker after perfect expression, he would sometimes spend a week over a single page and hours over a single phrase. His aim was to make every sentence at one and the same time rhythmical and pregnant with significance, and his chase for the one and only word which could render the particular shade of meaning he wished to convey has become proverbial. Maupassant, in his summary of Flaubert's literary counsels, remarks :

"Quelle que soit la chose qu'on veut dire, il n'y a qu'un mot pour l'exprimer, qu'un verbe pour l'animer et qu'un adjectif pour le qualifier." <sup>2</sup>

It is by practising this precept that Flaubert produces his effect of absolutely convincing veracity. There is not a sentence in *Madame Bovary* which fails to fulfil these conditions, and not a paragraph which lacks that curious

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance*, iii, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Pierre et Jean*.



inner rhythm which helps, as much as the words themselves, to convey the author's meaning. One example must suffice :

“ Le lendemain fut pour Emma une journée funèbre. Tout lui parut enveloppé par une atmosphère noire qui flottait confusément sur l'extérieur des choses, et le chagrin s'engouffrait dans son âme avec des hurlements doux, comme fait le vent d'hiver dans les châteaux abandonnés.”

To quote Professor Saintsbury, in Flaubert's work “ style-craft and story-craft have married each other so perfectly that they are one flesh for the lover of literature to rejoice in.”

With the exception of Gautier, whose stories have already been discussed, the only other prose-writer among Flaubert's contemporaries who can be called a devotee of art for art's sake was Eugène Fromentin (1820-1876). By training and profession Fromentin was a painter, and a painter who specialized in the picturesque and characteristic details of North African life. Finding, however, that the brush could not render all his sensations (“ il y a des formes pour l'esprit comme il y a des formes pour les yeux ” <sup>1</sup>), he took up the pen and in *Un Été dans le Sahara* (1857) and *Un Été dans le Sahel* (1858) gave a vivid chronicle of his travels in Algeria.

Fromentin also wrote a psychological love-story, *Dominique* (1863), a masterpiece of delicate analysis and of imaginative observation, containing unsurpassed descriptions of natural scenery, and more especially of autumn and winter landscapes. This jewel among novels belongs to no particular class, but fuses in a most subtle manner the best features of each.

In his last work, *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* (1876), the fruits of his studies in the picture galleries of Holland and Belgium, Fromentin reveals himself as the Sainte-Beuve of art criticism. Applying Taine's *race-moment-milieu* theory to the Dutch and Flemish schools of painting, with great

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Un Été dans le Sahara* (1874).

penetration and delicacy of touch, he explains their essential differences and the leading characteristics of their chief representatives.

Maupassant, who, more than any other writer, may be regarded as the spiritual heir of Flaubert, remarks of his master :

“ Il devait être le miroir des faits mais un miroir qui les reproduisait en leur donnant ce reflet inexprimable, ce je ne sais quoi de presque divin qui est l'art.”

This perfect equilibrium between art and reality was not attained by any of Flaubert's followers, with the possible exception of Maupassant himself. It is not to be found in the realistic impressionism of the Goncourts, nor in the more emotional realism of Daudet, nor yet in the naturalism of Zola and his school.

The brothers de Goncourt, Edmond (1822-1896) and Jules (1830-1870), who wrote in collaboration until the latter's death, like Flaubert, made an idol of their art, and insisted that reality, pure and simple, was its subject-matter.<sup>1</sup> But they aimed less at giving a picture of reality than at rendering, with every subtlety of style they could devise, the impressions made by rare or sordid reality on highly strung, sensitive natures—that is to say, their own, which they themselves described as “maladivement impressionnables.”

The Goncourts, who were passionate collectors of rare French and Japanese bibelots of the eighteenth century, began their literary career with studies of that age in France. Their *Portraits Intimes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (1857-8), *La Femme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (1862), and *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (1857-1875 ; three vols.), are pieced together out of unpublished documents, scraps of costume, letters, etc., in fact, out of anything that could be regarded as an unselfconscious revelation of the spirit of the time. When they came to write novels, they showed the same love of the *inédit*, and more particularly of the morbid

Realistic im-  
pressionism

EDMOND (1822-  
1896) and JULES  
(1830-1870)  
DE GONCOURT

Their studies  
of the eigh-  
teenth century

and abnormal. In their search for sensations that could provide them with literary material they visited law-courts, prisons, hospitals, and lunatic asylums, and then hastened home to note down their impressions in their famous *Journal* (begun in 1851, and brought to a close by Edmond in 1892), the reservoir from which they drew all their novels, sometimes elaborating, sometimes merely transcribing whole passages.

Their joint novels, composed always on the same method, are morbid and unsavoury, for the Goncourts were obsessed with the idea of disease—mental, moral, and physical. *Charles Demailly* (1860) is a story of the journalistic world; *Sœur Philomène* (1861), a study of hospital life and of the evil effects of drink; *Renée Mauperin* (1864) is the story of a highly strung girl of high society; *Germinie Lacertieux* (1865), the study of a low-class servant; and *Manette Salomon* (1867) describes the irregularities of studio life.

A novel by the Goncourts gives no impression of unity, because it is made up of an infinite number of details, all of equal prominence. As Arthur Symons remarks: "Their novels are scarcely stories at all, but picture galleries hung with pictures of the momentary aspects of the world."

The tediousness of these novels is redeemed—for those who like it—by an original and curious style of which the authors were inordinately proud, and which consisted mainly in a search for the rare epithet and in an attempt to reproduce their sensations in a language which by its jerkiness, feverishness, and lack of syntax, should faithfully reflect their own highly strung temperament.

After the death of his brother, Edmond de Goncourt wrote and published a few more novels which they had jointly planned, notably *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882), *La Fille Elisa* (1883), and *Chérie* (1884), which all have a very pronounced pathological tendency, and lay even more stress than the earlier novels on the influence of heredity and environment.

Perhaps the Goncourts' chief title to fame is their *Journal*, which throws many sidelights on the literary and artistic life in Paris during the second half of last century. Apart from their private intercourse with all the leading writers and artists of the time, the Goncourts were among the most assiduous frequenters of the famous fortnightly dinners at the Restaurant Magny, organized in 1862 by Sainte-Beuve and Gavarni, "un des derniers cénacles de la vraie liberté de penser et de parler."<sup>1</sup> Here they met Taine, Renan, Gautier, and, when they were in Paris, George Sand, Flaubert, Turgeniev, and many others. They also frequented the salon of the Princesse Mathilde, sister of Jérôme Bonaparte, who liked to gather round her distinguished men of letters.

In his will Edmond de Goncourt left his estate for the endowment of an Academy—the Académie Goncourt, which consists of ten members, and which awards—"à la jeunesse, à l'hardiesse et au talent"—an annual prize for a novel combining artistic and realistic qualities. It thus forms a kind of complement to the Académie Française, which rarely favours either "jeunesse" or "hardiesse." Among the original members were Alphonse Daudet, the brothers Rosny, and Jules Renard, author of the famous *Poil de Carotte* (1894). Unlike the "Immortal Forty," the Académie Goncourt opens its doors to both sexes, but so far it has only had one woman member, Madame Judith Gautier (1850-1917), a daughter of Théophile Gautier, and a student and popularizer of the literature and customs of China and Japan.

The Goncourts claim to have been the initiators of that literary naturalism which is both an exaggerated and a contracted form of realism. It is true that their novels were pathological rather than psychological, that they preferred the detail that smothers to the detail that illuminates, and they had the distorted notion that the uglier the subject-matter, the greater the truth; but it was Zola who invented the term, and it was

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, iii, p. 160.



he who gave to the naturalistic novel a dogmatic, or, as he thought, a scientific formula, and embodied it in the most striking examples.

Emile Zola (1840-1902) began, like Balzac, by writing novels and stories of a sensational and melodramatic kind, but already at the age of twenty-four he showed his undoubted gifts in a volume of delightful short stories entitled *Contes à Ninon* (1864), followed later by *Nouveaux Contes à Ninon* and other similar collections.

Zola's short stories, written at intervals throughout the first half of his literary career, deserve to be better known than they are, and one of them, *L'Attaque du Moulin* (1880), contributed to the naturalist symposium, *Les Soirées de Midan*, is, from the artistic point of view, the most perfect thing that Zola ever wrote. But from the very outset he had larger projects, and at a very early date he seems to have conceived the idea of assimilating literature to science and sociology. His powerful though gruesome novel, *Thérèse Raquin* (1867), already reveals this preoccupation. The same year appeared Claude Bernard's *Introduction à la Médecine Expérimentale*, and it was upon the ideas developed in this treatise, upon the Darwinian theories of heredity, evolution, and environment, and upon the literary positivism of Taine, who had introduced the determinism of the natural sciences into psychology and literature, that Zola built up his theory of naturalism. Before putting it to the test, he elaborated it in a series of critical articles on literature and art contributed to Villemessant's paper, *L'Événement*, and later collected under the title *Le Roman Expérimental* (1880).

It was not until order had been restored after the war of 1870 that Zola began to put his theories into practice by embarking on a great novel-cycle, *Les Rougon-Macquart: Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire* (1871-1893), which, both as a whole and in each of its twenty volumes taken singly, was to illustrate the principles of heredity,

EMILE ZOLA  
(1840-1902)

His short  
stories

LES ROUGON-  
MACQUART  
(1871-1893)



environment, and of the ruling passion. Zola's design is to follow the fortunes of the various members, legitimate and illegitimate, of a single family in all the environments, trades, and professions in which, through force of circumstances, they are placed, and incidentally to give a complete picture of French civilization under the Second Empire. The scheme was a great one, something on the lines of Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, but far more logical and systematic. As some one has remarked, however, this new *comédie humaine* deserves rather to be called a *comédie bestiale*, and thus to be regarded as the third part of a trilogy, of which Dante's *Divine Comedy* had been, as it were, the first instalment. For Zola not only regarded man as an animal led by his appetites, but chose to chronicle the lives of a family of degenerates, as he himself in medical language admits.

"Physiologiquement, les Rougon-Macquart sont la lente succession des accidents nerveux et sanguins qui se déclarent dans une race, à la suite d'une première lésion organique."<sup>1</sup>

From this entirely arbitrary theory of heredity Zola deduces the history of the Rougon family, representatives of which he studies in every walk of life—in politics (*Son Excellence Eugène Rougon*), in the financial world (*L'Argent*), in the Church (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*), the army (*La Débâcle*), in artistic and scientific circles (*L'Œuvre*, *Le Docteur Pascal*). Less fortunate members of the family are to be found among the shopkeeping class (*Au Bonheur des Dames*), among ordinary workmen (*L'Assommoir*), railwaymen (*La Bête Humaine*), domestic servants (*Pot-Bouille*), peasants (*La Terre*), and miners (*Germinal*).

Owing largely to the unsoundness of Zola's pseudo-scientific method, his novel-cycle as a whole is now dead, but three portions of it at least are likely to survive—*L'Assommoir* (1877), which has been described as "a sort of epic of the working classes," and "the most tremendous

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

exposure of the evils of drink in any language" ; *Germinal* (1885), the epic of a miners' strike and of the conflict between capital and labour ; and *La Débâcle* (1892), a broad and masterly study of the first act of the Franco-Prussian War. The excellence of these three novels lies in the fact that their subject-matter gave Zola scope for displaying what was probably his greatest artistic gift—the power of giving a vivid impression of vast crowds in movement, their instinctive behaviour and their elementary psychology.

Zola followed up *Les Rougon-Macquart* with a trilogy, *Les Trois Villes : Lourdes, Rome, Paris* (1894-1898), novels with a strong anti-clerical tendency, and then embarked upon a third novel sequence, *Les Quatre Evangiles* (1899-1903), of which he only lived to write three, *Fécondité, Travail, and Vérité*, preaching the gospel of their respective titles. To the last, which was a parable of the Dreyfus affair, in which its author had shown great courage and disinterestedness, he planned a sequel, *Justice*. These last three novels reveal the pessimist of the Rougon-Macquart transformed into a hopeful believer in social reconstruction.

Zola, like Flaubert, had a romantic temperament and a romantic imagination, but, unlike Flaubert, he never successfully suppressed either, and this was fortunate, for it is their symbolism and visionary quality, and not their naturalism, which give his novels a value as works of art. Like Victor Hugo, Zola saw his world—though it was a different one—through highly coloured magnifying-glasses, with the result that the reality he fain would give us has more often than not the quality of hallucination or nightmare. Like Victor Hugo again, and like Balzac, he over-simplifies his characters until they lose all value as individuals and become types summing up a whole social class. It has often been remarked that Zola's heroes are overshadowed by their environment or by some inanimate object to which

The imaginative character of Zola's novels

he imparts an intense and mysterious life. Just as the cathedral may be regarded as the central figure in *Notre Dame de Paris*, so in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* the chief personage is a wild and fantastic garden; in *Le Ventre de Paris* it is the central market; in *Germinal*, a coal-mine, "le Voreux," "avec son air mauvais de bête goulue accroupie là pour manger le monde"; in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, the large modern emporium; and in *La Bête Humaine*, a railway engine, "la Lison," which, "renversée sur les reins, le ventre ouvert," possesses itself of its driver in a mad flight through space. "To make his characters swarm," writes Henry James of Zola, "and to make the great central thing they swarm about 'as large as life,' portentously, heroically big, that was the task he set himself very nearly from the first, that was the secret he triumphantly mastered," and the result is that "the fullest, the most characteristic episodes affect us like a sounding chorus or procession, as with a hubbub of voices and a multitudinous tread of feet."<sup>1</sup>

Of the many other novelists of this period who have been roughly grouped as "naturalists," though they are all naturalists "with a difference," the most important are Ferdinand Fabre, Daudet, and Maupassant.

Ferdinand Fabre (1830-1898), who was destined for the priesthood, and who, like Renan, discovered before it was too late that he had no vocation, made his name with novels which are almost entirely "Scenes of Clerical Life," though they are of a very different order from those painted by George Eliot or Anthony Trollope. Fabre excels in the vigorous and sympathetic portrayal of the virtues and weaknesses most commonly to be found in the clerical character. The hero of his first novel, *Les Courbezon* (1862), is a charitable and lovable abbé who creates misery all round him owing to his imprudence and lack of foresight, thought, and common sense; *L'Abbé Tigrane, candidat à la papauté* (1873), the

FERDINAND  
FABRE  
(1830-1898)

<sup>1</sup> Henry James: *Notes on Novelists*.

finest of all Fabre's twenty or more novels, is a very powerful study of an ambitious, strong-willed, violent-tempered, and unscrupulous priest, who covets and secures successively a bishopric and an archbishopric, and is left at the end of the book aspiring to the papacy; *Mon Oncle Célestin* (1881) is a companion study of an entirely single-minded and warm-hearted country abbé; while *Lucifer* (1884), besides being a story of priestly pride and ambition ending in disaster, contains an almost complete gallery of clerical types.

Fabre's portraits are drawn with an intense realism; he is extraordinarily skilful in conveying the ecclesiastical atmosphere, and in depicting in its minutest detail the daily business of country priests. Most of his novels have for setting the wild and rocky scenery of his native Cevennes, and considerable space is given to the local manners and customs of its mountain villages. *Le Chévrier* (1868) has been compared to the rustic novels of George Sand, and it can well bear the comparison; but though idyllic in a sense, it is more intensely and brutally true to everyday rustic reality. For in Fabre's work there is undoubtedly some of that brutality in delineating truth which is commonly associated with naturalism, and the same remark applies to Daudet, more particularly in his later novels.

Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897) has been classed as a naturalist, for the reason given above, and more especially as a follower of the Goncourts, because of his nervous, impressionist style, and because of his fondness for the documentary method. He, too, kept a note-book, in which he jotted down his impressions as he received them, and he, too, was so eager to waste no scrap of material that, from the artistic point of view, his novels contain many episodes which have only a very indirect connection with the matter in hand. But Daudet came from the sunny lands of Provence (he was born at Nîmes), and being richly endowed with imagination, feeling, and humour, as well as with the power of looking at life objectively, he succeeded in avoiding the trivial and

ALPHONSE  
DAUDET  
(1840-1897)



in making his work, as Lanson puts it, "non seulement chose vue mais chose sentie." It is this gift of conveying emotion—be it sympathy or pity—that differentiates Daudet from Flaubert, the Goncourts, or Zola, and gives him a certain resemblance to Dickens, George Eliot, Dostoievski, and Tolstoi.

That Daudet had the gift of laughter and the gift of tears was clearly revealed in three of his earliest volumes—*Le Petit Chose* (1868), which is to a great extent the story of his own childhood and youth, and which has often been compared with *David Copperfield*; and two delightful collections of short stories, *Lettres de mon Moulin* (1869) and *Contes du Lundi* (1873). These two last, with their blend of pathos and humour, their delicate fancy and their inimitable style, would have sufficed to give their author a place in French literature, even if he had never written another line. The year before the appearance of the *Contes du Lundi*, Daudet wrote a humorous extravaganza caricaturing the comic elements in the temperament of the "méditerranéen" he knew so well, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, which has remained the most popular of all his books, followed later by two sequels, in which the hero, who had first made his appearance in the guise of a mighty hunter, reappears successively as the President of an Alpine Club (*Tartarin sur les Alpes*, 1885) and as the founder of a republic in Australasia (*Port-Tarascon*, 1890).

After the first *Tartarin*, Daudet took to novel-writing seriously, and was not long in acquiring great popularity. *Froment jeune et Risler aîné* (1874), by many regarded as his finest work, and *Jack* (1876), the pathetic story of a child sacrificed to his mother's selfishness, owe much, the one to

Novels of  
Parisian  
manners

Thackeray and the other to Dickens. Then followed in rapid succession a series of novels depicting Parisian manners, and incidentally throwing dirt at various contemporary celebrities—*Le Nabab* (1878), *Les Rois en Exil* (1879), *Numa Roumestan* (1880), alias Gambetta, a clever study of the southern temperament, *L'Évangéliste* (1883), and *L'Immortel* (1888), a



bitter attack on the French Academy, to which Daudet never belonged. These personalities, clever as they are, give a distressing touch of vulgarity to nearly all his later novels. To the end, however, he preserved his pathos and humour and his power of creating characters which were real and also typical. This last was, indeed, the gift on which he most prided himself.

“La vraie joie du romancier restera de créer des êtres, de mettre sur pied à force de vraisemblance des types d'humanité qui circulent désormais par le monde avec le nom, le geste, la grimace qu'il leur a donnés et qui font parler d'eux . . . en dehors de leur créateur et sans que son nom soit prononcé.”<sup>1</sup>

Flaubert, Zola, and Daudet, as we have seen, owe their place in French literature less to their intrinsic realism or naturalism than to other qualities which modified it, and were, indeed, often in opposition to it. We now come to a writer who transcribed reality so objectively, so serenely, and so intensely, that, as Faguet remarks, “le lecteur ne sait pas, quand il lit Maupassant, si c'est de l'art de Maupassant, ou seulement de la réalité qu'il a le goût.”<sup>2</sup>

Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) learnt his first lessons in the art and craft of literature from Flaubert, whose most ardent disciple he ever after remained. Obedience to Flaubert's dictates respecting the impersonal and impassive attitude of the artist came much more naturally to Maupassant than they did to their author. The former never felt the need of giving vent to his emotions, and being no enthusiast for ideas, moral or intellectual, his vision of reality was never disturbed by ulterior considerations, scientific, philosophical, or ethical. He was thus able to depict everyday life just as he saw it, and without any trace of that ill-repressed contempt and rebelliousness which is characteristic of Flaubert.

At heart, however, Maupassant was as great a pessimist

<sup>1</sup> *Trente Ans de Paris*: Histoire de mes livres.

<sup>2</sup> *Propos littéraires*, iii, p. 185.

and materialist as any of his contemporary brethren of the pen.

"La médiocrité de l'univers m'étonne et me révolte," he writes, "la petitesse de toutes choses m'emplit de dégoût, la pauvreté des êtres humains m'anéantit."

Like Zola, he saw little in man beyond ferocious and cunning animal instincts. His pessimism and his materialism, though never obtrusive, shut out from him vast tracts of life, feeling, and thought, and account for his undoubted limitations. He rarely portrayed anything beyond ordinary characters, ordinary scenery, and everyday events, priding himself on describing nothing that he had not actually seen and closely observed.

Maupassant's first published tale, *Boule de Suif* (1880), contributed to the famous *Soirées de Médan*, edited by Zola, at once revealed him as a master of French prose, with an unusual gift for the short story. The thirty-five volumes of his complete works contain, beside, some two hundred *contes* and *nouvelles*, a certain number of short novels, such as *Une Vie* (1882), *Bel-Ami* (1885), *Mont-Oriol* (1887), full of those unsavoury physiological and pathological details in which the naturalist school delighted, and *Pierre et Jean* (1888), *Fort Comme la Mort* (1889), and *Notre Cœur* (1890), which reveal a more delicate perception of the tragedy of life and a broader human sympathy than his earlier work.

Excellent as Maupassant's novels are from the artistic, if not from the moral point of view, his short stories are even better. Among so many good things it is hard to choose.<sup>1</sup> The majority of his tales are drawn from Norman peasant or lower middle-class life, seen in its comic and its tragic aspects (*Aux Champs*, *Le Garde*, *La Ficelle*, etc.); others are stories of the war of 1870-1871 (*Boule de Suif*, *Deux Amis*, *La Mère Sauvage*, *Les Prisonniers*, etc.); others, again, of super-

His short  
stories

<sup>1</sup> There is an excellent selection of Maupassant's tales edited by Marcel Prévost, and entitled *Contes Choisis de G. de Maupassant*, ed. pour la Jeunesse (Hachette).

natural terror (*Le Horla*, *Fou ?*, *Le Loup*, *Lettre trouvée sur un Noyé*, *La Peur*, *L'Auberge*, etc.). All these *contes* are written with the same intensity of vision, the same sharpness of definition, and in the same simple, vivid, yet sober style. As Pellissier remarks: "Il nous montre les choses elles-mêmes avec une transparence parfaite, si bien que, croyant les avoir sous les yeux nous oublions l'écrivain."

Even during the heyday of realism and naturalism there were a certain number of novelists who carried Other novelists on the traditions of romantic idealism in one form or another. Chief among these were Octave Feuillet and Victor Cherbuliez.

Octave Feuillet (1821-1890) was the direct literary successor of George Sand. Zola stigmatized his work as "un délayage de Musset et de George Sand," and the Goncourts sneeringly labelled him "le Musset des familles." Though his novels (*Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*, 1858; *Histoire de Sibylle*, 1862; *M. de Camors*, 1867; *Julie de Trécœur*, 1872, etc.) are frankly romantic and sentimental examples of society fiction, they are written with vigour, reveal no mean skill in the handling of character and in the art of telling a story, and give a vivid, if a somewhat one-sided, idea of one class of the society of his time.

Victor Cherbuliez (1829-1899), a Genevan by birth, produced in *Le Comte Kostia* (1863), *Le Prince Vital* (1864), *Le Roman d'une Honnête Femme* (1866), *L'Aventure de Ladislas Bolski* (1869), *Méta Holdenis* (1873), *Miss Rovel* (1875), etc., readable novels, full of ingenious incident and exciting sentimental situations in a cosmopolitan setting.

Of a very different order from either of these novelists were the collaborators Erckmann (1822-1899) and Chatrian (1826-1890), who, though they have no particular literary claim, enjoyed a considerable vogue in their own day. Their simply told patriotic novels and tales glorifying the Revolution and belittling Napoleon are interspersed with pictures of peasant life in the Vosges and Alsace (*Madame Thérèse*, 1863; *Histoire d'un Conscrit de 1813*, *L'Ami Fritz*, 1864; *Waterloo*, 1865, etc.). After 1870, for political and senti-

mental reasons, these *romans nationaux* were much admired in France, and since the development of the regional novel, and more particularly since the Great War, they have enjoyed a renewed popularity which seems somewhat out of proportion to their intrinsic merits

## CHAPTER V

### POETRY

#### ART FOR ART'S SAKE AND ARTISTIC REALISM IN POETRY—THÉOPHILE GAUTIER, THÉODORE DE BANVILLE, THE PARNASSIANS

THE poetry of this period follows the general drift of French literature and art, and becomes increasingly objective and impersonal. It, too, goes through a phase of realism—a phase which was the logical outcome of romanticism. Having run through the gamut of emotions poets retuned their lyres to render sensations pure and simple. After 1850 this evolution towards a more objective poetry is perceptible even in Victor Hugo, who, as we have seen, carried on single-handed the romanticism of 1830 for a quarter of a century after it had exhausted itself as a movement. But it reveals itself much more clearly, and at an earlier date, in the work of two poets who mark the transition from the romantic to the so-called Parnassian school of poetry.

Links between  
the romantic  
and the  
Parnassian  
school of  
poetry

Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), Hugo's staunchest and most truculent lieutenant during the rehearsals of *Hernani*, was by temperament and by early training a painter, and all his literary work is marked by a high pictorial quality. Unlike Victor Hugo, he believed that art is an end in itself, and that beauty is the only reality—not spiritual beauty, but beauty of form, sound and colour. Hence Gautier's own somewhat sententious remark, quoted by the Goncourts: "Je suis un homme pour qui le monde visible existe." Gautier's novels and tales have been discussed elsewhere. His earliest poems of note,

THÉOPHILE  
GAUTIER  
(1811-1872)



*Albertus* (1832), a wild tale of sorcery, and *La Comédie de la Mort* (1838), are highly romantic in theme, though the second is far more restrained in style than the first. Both abound in admirable descriptive passages, and display that command over poetical form which distinguishes the minor poems written between 1830 and 1840, and collected by Gautier in 1845. But the plastic and rhythmical qualities

*Emaux et  
Camées*  
(1852)

of his talent reach their highest expression in *Emaux et Camées* (1852), well-named enamels and cameos, for, as their author remarks in his preface :

“Ce titre exprime le dessein de traiter sous forme restreinte de petits sujets, tantôt sur plaques d'or ou de cuivre, avec les vives couleurs de l'émail, tantôt avec la roue du graveur de pierres fines, sur l'agate, la cornaline ou l'onix.”

This collection is very varied in tone, but each of its several poems, whether composed in a dreamy minor key (*Le Château du Souvenir*, *Variations sur le Carnaval de Venise*), in a tone of delicate humour and irony (*Les Fantaisies d'hiver*, *Nostalgie d'Obélisques*), or in one of loud laughter (*Le Souper des Armures*), or whether, on the other hand, its appeal is purely to the eye (*Etude des Mains*, *Symphonie en blanc majeur*), is unsurpassed in perfection of form and verbal beauty. Gautier was the first writer of his age to formulate the theory of “art for art's sake”—very fully in his preface to *Mademoiselle Maupin* (1835), and very poetically in the last poem of *Emaux et Camées*—*L'Art*, which is in itself an admirable example of its author's rhythmical skill.

“Les dieux eux-mêmes meurent,  
Mais les vers souverains  
Demeurent  
Plus fort que les airains.

Sculpte, lime, cisèle ;  
Que ton rêve flottant  
Se scelle  
Dans le bloc résistant.”

The reaction against the passionate subjectivity and exaltation of the romantic poets, who put content before form, was carried a step further by Gautier's friend and disciple, Théodore de Banville (1823-1891)—clown, juggler, acrobat, as he has been designated by French critics, because of his faculty for conjuring with rhythms and ringing the changes upon rime. The immense importance which Banville attached to form is clear on every page of his *Petit Traité de Versification française* (1872), published at the very end of his career, and summarizing his own practice, which by that time had in essentials become that of the Parnassian group. Here we find his famous definition of poetry as "l'art de grouper les mots de telle sorte que leur arrangement offre, *par lui-même*, un caractère musical," and the view expressed that "ou n'entend dans un vers que le mot qui est à la rime, et ce mot est un seul mot qui travaille à produire l'effet voulu par le poète." Even his earliest poetical ventures, *Les Cariatides* (1842) and *Les Stalactites* (1846) which contains the delightful "Nous n'irons plus aux bois," show great technical skill, and much feeling for the musical element in poetry; while *Les Odes Funambulesques* (1857), many of which are indeed acrobatic feats in rime and rhythm, contain an element of refined buffoonery rare in French verse. For the next ten years Banville abandoned lyrical poetry and devoted himself to writing comedies in verse, which made up in charm and distinction for what they lacked in dramatic quality, and of which the most famous is *Gringoire* (1866). His later lyrics, *Les Exilés* (1867), *Les Occidentales* (1869), *Les Idylles Prussiennes* (1871), in which the Prussian enemy is treated as an exaggerated type of the much-despised bourgeois, and *Trente-six Ballades Joyeuses* (1873), show the same consummate metrical skill, the same supple grace as his earlier collections. But Banville's inspiration remained to the end almost purely verbal, and even the rare beauty and flawlessness of its form cannot entirely make up for the lack of those spiritual and imaginative elements without which there is no great poetry.

THÉODORE DE  
BANVILLE  
(1823-1891)

The Parnas-  
sian group  
of poets

Théophile Gautier and Théodore de Banville prepared the way for a group of poets generally known as the Parnassians, who represent the dominant tendency in French poetry between 1850 and 1880. Catulle Mendès, who was allied to the Parnassians from the beginning of the movement, tells us how in the early fifties, soon after Victor Hugo had betaken himself into exile, "quelques jeunes gens, sans relations personnelles d'ailleurs avec les maîtres qu'ils s'é lurent plus tard, s'avisèrent de croire en la poésie et la beauté." <sup>1</sup> At the instigation of Catulle Mendès, the young publisher, Alphonse Lemerre, was induced to publish in 1866 an anthology bearing the title *Le Parnasse Contemporain, Recueil de Vers Nouveaux*, the first series of which (there were two others in 1871 and 1876) was published in eighteen instalments, and contained poems by Gautier, Banville, Leconte de Lisle, Coppée, Baudelaire, Sully Prudhomme, Verlaine, and Mallarmé. The title Parnassian was first used merely as a collective name for the contributors to this anthology, and superseded the designations *formiste*, *fantaisiste*, *styliste*, and *impassible*, which the press had freely applied to the younger school of poets. It was later narrowed down to Leconte de Lisle and his immediate circle (Sully Prudhomme, François Coppée, and Hérédia), who were all of one mind on three points at least—i.e. that all great art is impersonal, that the poet has no higher quality than the power of seeing truly, and of rendering what he sees in the most perfect form possible. Even this group gradually divided. Sully Prudhomme ended by devoting himself almost entirely to philosophical poetry, and François Coppée, who had begun

"Dédaignant la douleur vulgaire  
Qui pousse des cris importuns"  
(*Le Reliquaire*),

later constituted himself the poet of the lower middle classes and decent poor of Paris. The term Parnassian school is

<sup>1</sup> Catulle Mendès: *Rapport sur le Mouvement Poétique Français, 1867-1900* (1903).

thus a misnomer, unless we regard it as a school consisting of two men—Leconte de Lisle and Hérédia, who alone fully embody all the æsthetic doctrines implied by the term Parnassianism. The many other poets to whom the title Parnassian has been freely applied can only be included if one regards the cult of form, of art for art's sake, to the exclusion of inspiration and subject-matter.

Nevertheless, Leconte de Lisle undoubtedly determined the direction of French poetry for some twenty years, owing to the clarity of his aims and his masterly illustration of them. The preface to his *Poèmes Antiques* (1852) was immediately accepted as a gospel and a manifesto, and was in its own day scarcely less influential than the *Défense et Illustration* and the *Préface de Cromwell* had been in theirs. The ideas propounded in Leconte de Lisle's preface are, briefly, that poetry should be as impassive and as impersonal as nature, as exact as science, and as impeccable as a perfect piece of sculpture. Of the relative impersonality and impassivity, which was in the nature of a reaction against romantic rhapsody and romantic confession, enough has already been said elsewhere. Turning away from the parade of individual passions and individual judgments, and reluctant to draw conclusions, the Parnassian poets tended to carry the historical, and even the scientific, method into the realm of the imagination. Intellectual rather than emotional—"nous sommes une génération de savants," remarks Leconte de Lisle—these poets introduced the critical spirit into poetry, descriptive or metaphysical, believing with Leconte de Lisle that

"L'art et la science, longtemps séparés par suite des efforts divergents de l'intelligence, doivent tendre à s'unir étroitement, si ce n'est à se confondre."

This tendency is seen, not only in their love of the circumscribed, in the accuracy and exactitude with which they render local colour in time and space, but also in the way they dissect their attitude towards life and their own controlled emotions, for these neo-romantics were as eager



for precision and certitude in these matters as their predecessors had been content to leave them vague, indefinite, and mysterious.

With regard to the form as apart from the subject-matter of their work, it may truly be said that no poets ever set up a more inflexible ideal of beauty, plastic and musical, or more frequently attained it, and yet one would willingly forgo some of their flawlessness for something which never came within their ken :

"The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration and the poet's dream."

*on sais!*  
Charles Marie René Leconte de Lisle (1820-1894) was born in the Indian Ocean, on the French island of Réunion, where he lived until he was three, and then again from his tenth to his twentieth

year, the intervening period being spent with relatives in France. His father, a surgeon, hailing from Brittany, was deeply imbued with the doctrines of Rousseau and the Encyclopédistes, and his mother was a very pious and conservative woman, of Gascon origin, and a niece of Parny, the eighteenth-century poet. In this intellectual atmosphere and amid tropical scenery, Leconte de Lisle spent the most impressionable years of his life, and his ancestry and early environment were not for nothing in the development of his genius. As Hérédia puts it : "Le souvenir du pays natal l'a toujours hanté. Son cerveau en demeura comme baigné de lumière." In 1838 Leconte de Lisle set sail from his native island to finish his education at a French university. As a student of law at Rennes, he appears to have spent most of his time reading the French romantics and the masterpieces of English, German, and Italian literature, and dabbling in science, for he had already decided to become a poet, and felt that science plays far too important a part in modern life to be ignored even in poetry. Having passed his law examinations, Leconte de Lisle returned to Réunion, where he spent two unhappy years, misunderstood by his own people, who made fun of

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his poetical aspirations, and horrified by the sight and sounds of slavery which met him on every side. In 1847 he returned to France for good, settled down in Paris, and gave up all idea of anything but a literary career. The following year slavery was abolished in the French colonies, largely owing to his representations. Henceforward the history of his life is that of his poems—*Poèmes Antiques* (1852), vivid and scrupulously accurate pictures drawn from Greek and Oriental mythology ; *Poèmes et Poésies* (1854) ; and *Poèmes Barbares* (1862). In 1861 Leconte de Lisle began to publish his admirable prose translations of the Greek and Latin poets, which ended with his version of Euripides in 1885. A year earlier appeared his fifth volume of poems, the *Poèmes Tragiques*, to be followed by a sixth, *Derniers Poèmes*, published posthumously in 1895. In 1886 he succeeded Victor Hugo at the Académie Française, and during the later years of his life he exercised a very real sovereignty over literary Paris, even after the advent of the symbolists. Referring to his influence, Maurice Barrès remarks : “ Nul de ses familiers me démentira, si je lui vois quelques traits d'un Malherbe ou d'un Boileau.”

Leconte de Lisle was what the French term an “ intellectual,” with the result that his general ideas and his philosophy of life are of interest to the reader of his poetry. From his earliest boyhood he was an ardent Republican, and hater of brute-force or tyranny of any kind, and the champion of the down-trodden. Later he worked for the abolition of slavery, and took a small part in the Revolution of 1848, but otherwise he stood aloof from the political movements of the day. M. Calmette, in an interesting book, *Leconte de Lisle et ses Amis*, explains this apparent contradiction by the fact that Leconte de Lisle was an intellectual aristocrat. He had no sooner stepped down into the arena than he became disgusted with the stupidity and vulgarity of the people for whom he had been ready to fight. His aloofness and detachment from the burning questions of the day was thus not the result of indifference, but of a desire to keep

Leconte de  
Lisle's  
philosophy of  
life

his own ideals intact, and to cloak the intensity of his feelings. Hence the cry of loneliness and isolation which occasionally escapes from his poetry :

“ . . . Vois, mon âme est semblable à quelque morne espace  
Où seul je m'interroge, où je me réponds seul.”

—*La Paix des Dieux (Derniers Poèmes)*.

Catulle Mendès, who knew the poet well, describes him as “quelque chose comme un volcan couvert de glace,” and indeed his so-called impassivity both in life and art was more apparent than real. Leconte de Lisle's pessimism has also been exaggerated, or, perhaps more accurately, misinterpreted. Brunetière compares him with the romantics, and says that he always considered that “le premier bonheur pour l'homme était de ne pas naître, le second était de mourir.” It is true that he frequently calls upon death in his poems, yet he never seems to have been able to regard its coming with serenity.

“ L'intelligible cesse, et voici l'agonie,  
Le mépris de soi-même, et l'ombre et le remord,  
Et le renoncement furieux du génie.”

Again, Leconte de Lisle never regarded himself as the chosen prey of destiny, nor was he convinced of the uselessness of life in any season or in any clime, but rather of its hopelessness for all men in the present condition of Western civilization. From the spectacle of the stupidity, ugliness, and mercenary spirit of modern times, laid bare in *Aux Modernes (Poèmes Barbares)*, he turns with relief to the freedom, simplicity, and vigour of the primitive world.

“ Oh ! la tente au désert et sur les monts sublimes,  
Les grandes visions sous les cèdres pensifs,  
Et la liberté vierge et ces cris magnanimes,  
Et le débordement des transports primitifs ! ”

—*Dies Iræ (Poèmes Antiques)*.

Leconte de Lisle finds a justification for his contemplative inaction in the philosophy of India. Buddhism, which teaches, among other things, that pain, which is inseparable from existence, is engendered by desire :—

“ Bien des siècles sont morts depuis que l’homme pleure  
Et qu’un âpre désir nous consume et nous leurre,  
Plus ardent que le feu sans fin et plus amer ”

—*Le Vœu Suprême (Poèmes Barbares)*—

Nirvana (i.e. the extinction of individuality and the absorption into the supreme spirit) can alone bring relief, and Leconte de Lisle would fain plunge into a Nirvana of his own :

“ Nature ! Immensité si tranquille et si belle,  
Majestueux abîme où dort l’oubli sacré,  
Que ne me plongeais-tu dans ta paix éternelle,  
Quand je n’avais encor ni souffert ni pleuré.

Laissant ce corps d’une heure errer à l’aventure  
Par le torrent banal de la foule emporté,  
Que n’en détachais-tu l’âme en fleur, ô Nature,  
Pour l’absorber dans ton impassible beauté.”

—*Ultra Cœlus (Poèmes Barbares)*.

In spite of his imaginative escapes from Europe and the nineteenth century to ancient Greece and Scandinavia, and to the Far East and the Far South, Leconte de Lisle is essentially a modern poet—modern by reason of what has been called his “socialistic imagination” ; modern, again, by reason of his scientific interpretation of nature and life ; modern even in his pessimism, which, as has been shown, was the result of his experience of nineteenth-century civilization in the West, and in no wise due to his researches into ancient or primitive customs. Many of Leconte de Lisle’s finest poems are frescoes, in which the individual is lost in the crowd (*La Runoia, Le Massacre de Mona, La Vision de Snorr, Les Eléphants*), or is merely the mouthpiece of the crowd (*Caïn*)—vast epic paintings of that “collective life” of which contemporary sociologists have so much to tell us. But he is, above all, a modern of the moderns in his scientific attitude towards the universe. “Des yeux de poète ouverts sur des hypothèses de la science,” says Bourget, “c’est presque la genèse entière des *Poèmes Antiques* et des *Poèmes Barbares*.” His poems are inspired

Leconte de  
Lisle essen-  
tially a modern  
poet

both by an evolutionist theory of the history of religions, and by an evolutionist theory of beast and man. In a series of poems dealing with Indian and pagan religions (*Surga, Bhagavat, La Vision de Brahma, Kybèle, Hypathie et Cyrille*), and with northern myths and christianity (*La Légende des Nornes, Les Ascètes, Le Nazaréen, Les Parables de Don Guy*) he endeavours to show that each religion has had its hour of truth and beauty, but that no religion has more than a provisional value. Leconte de Lisle is an evolutionist, too, in his belief that animals are but a lower form of humanity, and that their more rudimentary brains know emotions which vaguely resemble ours, just as we share many of their instincts and appetites. This idea is clearly expressed in *Sacra Fames*, and in the last lines of *Les Hurleurs* :

"Ô chiens qui hurlez sur les plages,  
Après tant de soleils qui ne reviendront plus,  
J'entends toujours, du fond de mon passé confus  
Le cri désespéré de vos douleurs sauvages !"

Leconte de Lisle's superiority as an animal painter over his predecessors, and indeed over many of his successors, may be seen in *Le Rêve du Jaguar, La Panthère Noire, Les Jungles*, and *Le Loup*, which reveal not only great pictorial skill, but a real insight into animal psychology.

Critics never weary of pointing out that Leconte de Lisle's poetry appeals almost entirely to the eye, and it is true that the majority of his purple patches have either a sculptural quality, like the passage in *Caïn*, beginning—

"Et les femmes marchaient, géantes, d'un pas lent,  
Sous les vases d'airain qu'emplit l'eau des citernes,  
Graves, et les bras nus, et les mains sur le flanc"—

or else they are inundated with the light and colour which are only to be found under tropical skies (cf. *L'Aurore*). For Leconte de Lisle knows no half-tones. His palette, which is even richer than Victor Hugo's, is composed entirely of pure, bright colours. But he was almost equally sensi-

Plastic quality  
of Leconte de  
Lisle's poetry



tive to sounds, and not only makes a very skilful use of alliteration and assonance—take, for instance, the heavy and lethargic effect conveyed by the repeated “o’s” and nasals in the following lines :

“ Comme des troncs pesants flottaient les crocodiles ”

—but also, and more particularly in his pictures of wild animals, he often obtains his whole effect by a description of the sounds and movements they make. For instance, in *Cain*, the passage heard, but not seen, of an antediluvian monster through the desert at night is conveyed to us thus. The sandy waste is

“ parfois traversé brusquement  
Par quelque monstre épais qui grinçait des mâchoires  
Et laissait après lui comme un ébranlement.”

Or, again, in his description of a tiger :

“ Le frisson de la faim creuse son maigre flanc ;  
Hérissé, sur soi-même, il tourne en grommelant ;  
Contre le sol rugueux il s’étire et se traîne,  
Flaire l’étroit sentier qui conduit à la plaine,  
Et, se levant dans l’herbe avec un baillement,  
Au travers de la nuit miaule tristement.”

—*Les Jungles.*

Leconte de Lisle gives us wonderful pictures of nature in repose. Two of his most admired poems, *Midi* and *Juin*, produce an unmatched impression, the one of the drowsiness of a midsummer noon, the other of the still and dewy freshness of a summer dawn ; while *Le Sommeil du Condor* and *Nox* are symphonies of the hush of night.

Leconte de Lisle, who was a lover of the wide spaces of the earth, rarely describes European landscapes, and indeed the Andes, the Pacific, and the desert are the only possible setting for the tragic primitive passions of some of his “legends of the ages.” No better example of his power of conveying the idea of space and distance can be given than a short poem entitled *Les Eléphants*, which begins with an impression of perfect stillness, broken suddenly by the tramp of approaching elephants :

His landscapes



"Ils passent  
Comme une ligne noire, au sable illimité ;  
Et le désert reprend son immobilité  
Quand les lourds voyageurs à l'horizon s'effacent."

Leconte de Lisle is best known and most admired for his evocation of Greek, Celtic, Finnish, and Indian civilizations, and for his paintings of the scenery and animal life of the tropics ; and he is, indeed, a master of description, but interspersed among this splendid pageantry are some poems of a different inspiration, such lyrics, written in a restrained elegiac tone, as *Requies* ; *Le Manchy*, composed in memory of the Creole lost-love of his youth ; and *L'Illusion Suprême*, charged with longing for the home of his birth ; while the only two of his poems inspired by contemporary events—*A l'Italie* and *Le Sacre de Paris*—both on the theme that it is better for a whole nation to die than to accept servitude, would deserve a place in any anthology of their author's work.

Leconte de Lisle's weaknesses as a lyrical poet are, on the one hand, a certain lofty monotony due to his one-sided conception of life and the universe, and to an over-fondness for slow majestic words ; and, on the other, the narrow range of inspiration imposed by his theory of impersonal art, which excluded certain eternal sources of lyricism.

José-Marie de Hérédia (1842-1905), Leconte de Lisle's closest disciple, has been jokingly reproached for having robbed Spain of a poet, for he was born in Cuba of a Spanish father, and he traced his ancestry direct from one of those *conquistadores* of the New World who had sailed the Spanish main with Cortez. But his mother came from a Norman family, and so when Hérédia was eight years old it was decided to send him to school in France. After receiving a sound classical education under the priests of Saint Vincent at Senlis, he spent a year studying law and theology at the University of Havana in his native island, and then returned to France to complete his education by a course of history and palæography at the Ecole des Chartes in Paris, where he finally

His poetry as  
a whole

JOSÉ-MARIE  
DE HÉRÉDIA  
(1842-1905)

settled down for good. Here he soon entered into friendly relations with Leconte de Lisle, and became a prominent member of the Parnassian group.

Hérédia's first published verses appeared in the *Revue de Paris* for 1862, and for the next thirty years or more his sonnets were doled out singly or in small groups in the literary reviews and in the successive *Parnasses*. At the age of fifty Hérédia, under considerable pressure, collected his scattered sonnets under the title *Les Trophées* (1893), thus endowing the Parnassian movement with a kind of posthumous success, for, despite the fact that by that date Parnassianism was a thing of the past, the book had an immediate and extraordinary success, twelve editions being exhausted between May and December, 1893. Three years later its author succeeded his friend and master, Leconte de Lisle, at the Académie Française, over the head of Zola.

Few purely literary men have been received by that august body on the merits of work so small in quantity, for beyond his one slender volume of verse, Hérédia published nothing save some prose translations from the Spanish, and an introduction or so to other men's works. *Les Trophées*, which represents the achievement of a lifetime, and contains the concentrated essence of Hérédia's culture and learning, consists of one hundred and eighteen sonnets dealing in successive series with the art and life (and more particularly the everyday life) of ancient Greece and Sicily, of Rome and the Barbarians, of France, Italy, and Spain during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, of the Tropics and the Far East (more especially Japan), and concluding with a section entitled *La Nature et le Rêve*, which is mainly devoted to Brittany. This sonnet sequence is quite appropriately completed by a *Romancero* and a narrative poem on the exploits of Pizarro—*Les Conquérants de l'Or*. Hérédia is thus almost exclusively a sonneteer, who deliberately chose this form because its brevity and difficulty demands "une conscience dans l'exécution et une concentration dans la pensée qui ne peuvent qu'exciter et pousser à la

perfection l'artiste digne de ce beau nom." In all times and countries the sonnet has been most commonly used for the expression of personal feelings, but Hérédia, faithful to the tenets of his school, used it exclusively as a framework for some characteristic phase or scene in man's long history, chosen always for its pomp, colour, or decorative effect. For *Les Trophées* are, indeed, what François Coppée called them, a *Légende des Siècles* in sonnet form, but a *Légende des Siècles* in which no theories are advanced, no causes pleaded, and in which each single poem presupposes deep researches into the period, country, and theme with which it is concerned. Maurice Barrès tells us that Hérédia "dans chaque sonnet des Trophées, a concentré, écrasé la matière de soixante volumes bien choisis," and again that it took him ten years to find the second tercet of *Vitrail*. Such labours were well rewarded, for Hérédia's sonnets are flawless, though their very perfection at times gives an impression of effort. To quote a felicitous simile of Mr. John Bailey's: "To the trained ear the sound of a perfect sonnet is like the rise and fall of a wave on the shore, only that it has in it no moment so marked as that of the breaking of the wave," and Hérédia's sonnets fully justify this comparison, for between the octave and the sextet there is always a very clear pause in the scene or narrative (cf. *Le Laboureur*). Some of these sonnets are very dramatic—a strange situation unfolds itself (*Fuite de Centaures, Andromède au Monstre*), and we are left wondering until the last tercet, or sometimes even until the last line for the key to the mystery. For Hérédia generally ends his sonnets with a line charged with meaning, and musical, with a haunting sonority, as in the sonnet entitled *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, where Antony, gazing into the eyes of the Egyptian enchantress, saw there

"Toute une mer immense où fuyaient des galères."

Hérédia had a great gift for mingling pictorial and sonorous effects. To give only one example out of a multitude :

"Et plus clair en l'azur noir de la nuit sereine  
 Silencieusement s'argente le croissant."

Born, like Leconte de Lisle, under a tropical sky, he never lost his taste for what was rich and splendid in sound and colour, though in some of the sonnets devoted to Breton scenery and the humble lives of Breton fisher-folk, he very skilfully renders the grey melancholy of Northern seas and skies (*Soleil Couchant, Mer Montante*).

By his consummate genius for concentration, Hérédia is the most typical representative of the first neo-romantic generation, in so far as it embodied a reaction against the lavishness and diffuseness of its elders. No writer in prose or verse ever made such a distilled essence of the world of facts, historical or legendary. A few examples may suffice. The fourteen lines of *Némée* summarize the origin of the legend of Hercules; *La Belle Viole* gives the essentials of Du Bellay's genius and personality, while four lines in *Médaille Antique* contain a bird's-eye view of the history of Sicily :

"Perdant la pureté de son profil divin,  
 Tour à tour Aréthuse esclave et favorite  
 A mêlé dans sa veine où le sang grec s'irrite  
 La fureur sarrasine à l'orgueil arévin."

Leconte de Lisle and Hérédia, whatever their limitations, were real poets. Great is the fall from them to Sully Prudhomme and François Coppée, who were merely artists in verse.

Of Sully Prudhomme (1839-1907), the author of the famous *Vase Brisé*, and the winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1902, much good has been said by French critics. They praise his accurate rendering of the most subtle shades of feeling in *Stances et Poèmes* (1865), *Les Épreuves* (1866), *Les Solitudes* (1869), *Les Vaines Tendresses* (1872), and when their author seeks inspiration in philosophy, and, convinced that poetry can interpret "outre tous les sentiments presque toutes les idées," tries to justify this view in *La Justice* (1878), *Le Prisme* (1886), and *Le Bonheur* (1888), they praise

Sully Prud-  
 homme  
 (1839-1907)



"cette simplicité, cette candeur sur lesquelles son scepticisme philosophique s'élève comme sur deux ailes dans les hautes régions où la foi ravissait les mystiques." <sup>1</sup>

It is true that Sully Prudhomme was a cunning distiller of refined and elegant emotions, but he has no lyrical swing. As a philosophical poet he has much that is edifying, but little that is original or profound, to tell us, nor has he the imaginative sweep which might make us forget this. It may seem strange, from what has been said about Sully Prudhomme, that he should ever have been classed among the Parnassians, but even in his most personal poems he applies to his own thoughts and feelings the precise and rigorous method of observation, which the rest of his group applied to the external world. Later, it is true, when he came to regard poetry as a vehicle for his own thoughts, and as a medium for stating the laws of science rather than as a representation of things seen, he broke away almost completely from the Parnassian doctrine. But in one point he remained at one with it to the end: even more than Leconte de Lisle he sought to unite art and science in his poetry. His philosophy is based on the great hypotheses of physics and natural history—and though at times this scientific element weighs heavily upon his verse, at others he succeeds in giving it symbolical value, and it is on these occasions that Sully Prudhomme is at his best. A good example is to be found in a short poem entitled *Le Zénith*, in which a balloon ascent symbolizes the soaring aspirations of the soul freed from the heaviness of the body. Others are to be found in certain passages of *Justice* and *Bonheur*.

Those who prefer to read their "higher thought" in verse rather than in prose will find satisfaction in Sully Prudhomme, while those who have a taste for sentimental realism in narrative poetry will find plenty of it in the poems of François Coppée (1842-1908), who, after writing lyrics in the approved Parnassian style (*Le Reliquaire*, 1866; *Les Intimités*, 1868), discovered his

<sup>1</sup> Anatole France: *La Vie Littéraire*.



particular line in singing "the short and simple annals of the poor" (*La Grève des Forgerons* and *Poèmes Modernes*, 1869; *Les Humbles*, 1872; *Le Cahier Rouge*, 1874, etc.). Though not a great poet in any sense of the word, Coppée is a clever and easy verse-writer who handles the *conte en vers* admirably (*L'Un ou L'Autre*, *Le Liseron*, etc.), and excels in the description of everyday Paris street scenes. Most of his poems are an attempt to poetize the commonplace—and not infrequently the trivial. Coppée also wrote short stories in prose (*Une Idylle pendant le Siège*, *Contes en Prose*, *Longues et Brèves*, etc.), in which, even more than in his verse-tales, sentiment too often degenerates into sentimentality. But it is for his poetical dramas—*Le Passant* (1869), *Le Trésor* (1878), *Severo Torelli* (1883), and *Pour la Couronne* (1895)—that he is most likely to be remembered.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DRAMA AFTER 1850

**T**HE stage, though it had been the noisiest battleground of the romantic school, was also the one on which its victories were destined to be least enduring. We have already seen some of the æsthetic reasons for this, but there was another of a more immediate and practical nature. In order to be really successful, the drama, more than any other literary form, must in some measure at least, adapt itself to the prevailing tastes of the day. Now, the romantic drama may be said to have pleased no one but its creators and the few who shared their views. The peaceable, conservative bourgeois, intent on growing rich, who formed the vast majority of the theatre-going public, had no sympathy with exalted sentiment, and only went to the play to be amused; while the democrats and revolutionaries, who formed the minority, regarded the romantic dramatists as lovers of things dead and gone, and hence as reactionaries. The romantics consistently refused to pander to middle-class tastes. The bourgeois, nevertheless, had his poet—Béranger; his novelist—Paul de Kock; and last, but by no means least, his dramatist—Scribe.

Eugène Scribe (1791-1861), in some four hundred pieces, many of them written in collaboration with other playwrights, gave the middle-class playgoer exactly what he wanted—amusement and nothing more. After beginning with numerous farces and vaudevilles,<sup>1</sup> Scribe made his début

**I. COMEDY  
OF MANNERS  
AND PROB-  
LEM PLAYS**

EUGÈNE  
SCRIBE  
(1791-1861)

<sup>1</sup> *Vaudeville*, originally *Vau de Vire*, name given to the satirical

in serious comedy in 1822 with *Valérie*, and followed up this first success with numerous plays of the same kind, notably *Le Mariage d'Argent* (1827), *La Camaraderie* (1836), *Une Chaîne* (1841), *Adrienne Lecouvreur* (1849), and *Bataille de Dames* (1851). Scribe also wrote historical plays (*Bertrand et Raton*, 1833; *Le Verre d'Eau*, 1840), and the libretti of many of the most famous operas of the mid-century (*Fra Diavolo*, *Robert le Diable*, *La Juive*, *Les Huguenots*, *Le Prophète*, etc.).

Scribe's plays are innocent of ideas or style, nor do they reveal more than very superficial powers of observation—the main inspiration of his comedies of manners appears to be a glorification of wealth and a contempt for poverty, and under the bourgeois régime of Louis Philippe this could not fail to appeal to the general public. Scribe owes his place in literature to the extraordinary skill he displayed in inventing and handling plots, and to his dramatic technique generally. "L'art y est, si tout le reste y manque,"<sup>1</sup> remarks Brunetière in a study of Scribe's plays, and as a theatrical craftsman his influence on his younger contemporaries and his successors is unmistakable. As far as comedy is concerned, Scribe, with his belief that play-writing is a highly specialized art, was an isolated figure in his own generation, yet his work cannot in any way be regarded as representing an intentional reaction against the romantic drama. That reaction only set in when his fame as a dramatist had long been secure—i.e. after the failure of *Les Burgraves* and the success of Ponsard's *Lucrèce*—and it was represented by the so-called *Ecole de Bon Sens*,

songs composed in the fifteenth century by a certain Olivier Basselin, who lived in the valley of the Vire in Normandy. The term *Vau de Vire* degenerated into *Vaudeville*, and was applied to a certain type of comic song until the end of the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the same century songs of this kind were introduced into popular comedy—hence the term *comédies avec vaudevilles*, and later *vaudevilles*. After Scribe and Labiche a *vaudeville* came to mean any light comedy with an amusing and clever plot.

<sup>1</sup> *Epoques du Théâtre Français*.

which aimed definitely at being as prosaic, highly moral, and purely French as the romantics had been lyrical, exalted, and exotic. Ponsard was acclaimed its chief, and Latour, Scribe, and the early Emile Augier were counted its leading exponents. Ponsard, who declared boldly, "Pour ma part, je n'admets que la souveraineté du bon sens ; je tiens que toute doctrine ancienne ou moderne, doit être continuellement soumise à l'examen de ce juge suprême," is now chiefly remembered, not for his regular tragedies, *Lucrèce* (1843), *Charlotte Corday* (1850), and *Le Lion Amoureux* (1866)—but for his comedy of manners, *L'Honneur et l'Argent* (1853).

The Ecole de Bons Sens was short-lived (c. 1844-1853), and the plays which it produced were for the most part mediocre ; but it has its historical importance, for it helped to determine the realistic movement in the drama, and one of its members, Emile Augier, with Dumas fils and Sardou, may be said to have held the French stage during the Second Empire. These three men, under the combined influence of Scribe's technique, of Balzac's novels, and of romantic drama, wrote comedies of serious purpose, inspired by the facts and problems of modern life. The romantic dramatists had prepared the way for a serious comedy of manners by breaking down, once and for all, the barriers between tragedy and comedy, by making the passion of love the mainspring of every dramatic action, and by setting the fashion of problem plays. The new dramatists accepted these innovations, and poured the content of Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* into the shell of plot and situation constructed by Scribe.

These plays are serious, often moving, and the comic element is generally only an accessory. The majority of them have a moral purpose which differentiates them from most of the realistic literature of the period.

Alexandre Dumas the Younger (1824-1895), son of the famous novelist, began his literary career by treading in his father's footsteps, and obtained his first success on the

L'Ecole de  
Bon Sens  
(c. 1844-1853)

Helped to  
determine the  
realistic move-  
ment on the  
stage

stage in 1852, with the dramatized version of a novel written some years before, *La Dame aux Camélias*. This play, written when its author was barely twenty-five, has that freshness and charm of early youth which age cannot wither nor custom stale. It deserves a high place among the love stories of the world, and in the history of the drama it may be regarded as the first great comedy of manners produced on the French stage in the nineteenth century. Dumas followed it up by *Diane de Lys* (1853), *Le Demi-Monde* (1855), *La Question d'Argent* (1857), *Le Fils Naturel* (1858), *Un Père Prodigue* (1859), *L'Ami des Femmes* (1864), all of which combine in almost equal proportions the features of the comedy of manners and the problem play. In a further group—*Les Idées de Madame Aubray* (1867), *La Visite de Noces* (1871), *La Princesse Georges* (1871), *Denise* (1885), and *Francillon* (1887)—Dumas definitely subordinates the dramatic interest of the play to the demonstration of some moral or social thesis; while in a third group of plays—*La Femme de Claude* (1873), *Monsieur Alphonse* (1874), *L'Etrangère* (1876), and *La Princesse de Bagdad*—his concern with a thesis imparts to his heroes, and more especially to his heroines, an abstract and symbolical character which robs them of their human interest.

By birth, education, and, to a certain extent, by temperament, Dumas "sprang straight from the lap of full-grown romanticism," and to the end of his days he preserved a strong romantic bias, as may be seen in the romanesque character of some of his plots, in his fondness for the violent and the exceptional, and in his love of lyrical declamation. Yet, both by aim and conviction, he was a realist, and a didactic realist, who endeavoured to give an accurate transcription of those aspects of contemporary life with which he was most familiar, from the point of view of a moralist, for Dumas was a firm believer in the social mission of the stage. Love is the passion with which he was almost exclusively concerned, but he studied it not for its beauty or poetry, but in the light of right and wrong, duty and

ALEXANDRE  
DUMAS THE  
YOUNGER  
(1824-1895)

1852



conduct, and with regard to the inevitable results of its misuse : " 2 et 2 font 4, et 4 et 4 font 8. Le théâtre est aussi impitoyable que l'arithmétique." <sup>1</sup> In nearly all Dumas' plays there is a character (technically known as *le raisonneur*) who is the mouthpiece of the author's ideas, and who does his preaching for him. Not content with this, Dumas preached long and often in his numerous and voluminous prefaces. Didacticism is indeed his besetting sin, but it mars his plays less than might be expected, because it is admirably counterbalanced by great dramatic and literary gifts. No one knew better than Dumas how to create interesting situations, lead up to a crisis, handle dialogue, and make characters really live. His dramatic instinct and technique, his keen powers of observation, and his trenchant wit, give to his plays the rare combination of acting and literary quality.

Emile Augier (1820-1889), under the influence of Ponsard, began his career as a dramatist with pseudo-classical and historical plays in verse (*La Ciguë*, 1844; *L'Aventurière*, 1848; *Le Joueur de Flûte*, 1850).

In 1849, three years before *La Dame aux Camélias*, he produced *Gabrielle*, a realistic comedy of contemporary manners in verse, attacking the false sentiment and false passion which romanticism had made fashionable. In all his later comedies Augier, following the lead of the younger Dumas, abandoned verse for prose, and made a special study of the demoralizing effects of the greed for gold and lust for power which he saw on every side in the France of his day, and of the consequent unnatural intermingling of the various classes of society. His masterpiece, *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* (1854), one of the classics of the modern stage, is a portrait from the life of the nineteenth-century *bourgeois-gentilhomme*. Augier followed up this first success with *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (1855), *Ceinture Dorée* (1856), *Les Lionnes Pauvres* (1858), and *Maître Guérin* (1864), in all of

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Les Idées de Madame Aubray*.

which the action turns on the conflict between honour and money.

Apart from these comedies of manners pure and simple, Augier also tried his hand at political comedy (*Les Effrontés*, 1861; *Le Fils du Giboyer*, 1862; *Lions et Renards*, 1869) and at problem-plays (*Paul Forestier*, 1868; *Madame Caverlet*, 1876; *Les Fourchambault*, 1878).

Augier, who was a bourgeois himself, has the sane and practical, though somewhat limited, outlook on life of the middle classes of his day, and upholds their ideas about love, marriage, and the family. Yet he is much less of a preacher than Dumas, and even in his *pièces-à-thèse* he never loses touch with reality. The setting of his plays is almost exclusively domestic, and they owe their interest, not to an elaborate plot, nor yet to psychological complexities, but to the lively characterization of somewhat simple natures with set habits of life and thought. Though Augier constructed his comedies with great skill, he had not such a strongly developed dramatic instinct as Dumas, and his style, though fluent and natural, shows less originality.

By the side of Dumas and Augier, their somewhat younger contemporary, Victorien Sardou (1831-1908), inferior to them in literary quality but not in popularity, scored successes in almost every kind of play—comedy of intrigue (*Les Pattes de Mouche*, 1861); comedy of manners of a somewhat superficial kind (*Nos Intimes*, 1861; *La Famille Benoiton*, 1865; *Nos Bons Villageois*, 1866; *Divorçons*, 1888); political comedy (*Rabagas*, 1872); and historical dramas (*Patrie*, 1869; *La Haine*, 1875; *La Tosca*, 1887; *Thermidor*, 1891; *Madame Sans-Gêne*, 1893). As a writer of comedy, Sardou was a second Scribe, with a wider satirical range. His plays reveal a remarkable knowledge of the requirements of the stage, and a brilliant technique, and they make up in liveliness and cleverness for what they lack in depth and sincerity.

On the whole, it may be said that the only literary form

which reflected the frivolous and pleasure-loving tastes of society under the Second Empire was the *vaudeville*, or light comedy, which flourished so exceedingly during that period, and which has ever since remained a speciality of the French stage. Of the many successful playwrights in this line, three stand out supreme—Labiche, Meilhac and Halévy.

## II. LIGHT COMEDY

EUGÈNE  
LABICHE  
(1815-1888)

Eugène Labiche (1815-1888), for over forty years the most popular *vaudevilliste* in France, wrote sparkling and witty plays, the best known of which are *Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* (1851); *Le Misanthrope et l'Auvergnat* (1854); *Le Voyage de M. Perrichon* (1860), his masterpiece; *La Poudre aux Yeux* (1861); and *La Cagnotte* (1864).

MEILHAC  
(1831-1897)  
and  
HALÉVY  
(1834-1908)

Meilhac (1831-1897) and Halévy (1834-1908), who wrote in collaboration, were much applauded for their vaudevilles, *La Vie Parisienne* (1867), *Froufrou* (1869), *La Petite Marquise* (1874), and even more so for their comic operas (music by Offenbach), of which the most famous are *Orphée aux Enfers* (1861), *La Belle Hélène* (1865), and *La Grande-Duchesse de Gerolstein* (1867). Sarcey sums up the respective merits of these two collaborators as follows:

“Doué d'un sens exquis de la réalité, M. Ludovic Halévy a maintenu ce qu'il y a de trop fantasque et d'un peu bizarre dans le tour d'imagination de M. Meilhac.”

Somewhat later, Edouard Pailleron (1834-1899) made his name with *Le Monde où l'on s'Ennuie* (1881), a nineteenth-century counterpart of the *Précieuses Ridicules*, and the *Femmes Savantes*, which is still a favourite with playgoers.

PAILLERON  
(1834-1899)

Naturalism had almost run its course in the novel before it made its appearance on the stage, and its short-lived success in the drama coincided chronologically with newer tendencies in other departments of literature.

## III. THE NATURALISTIC DRAMA

Edmond de Goncourt has the doubtful honour of having written the first *drame naturaliste*—*Henriette Maréchale* (1865). Somewhat later a number of the novels of Zola and the Goncourts were dramatized by their authors and others, but none of these adaptations had any great merit or success.

One French playwright only can be said to have writtenactable plays according to the purely naturalistic formula. This was Henri Becque (1837–1899), who aimed at freeing the drama from all theatrical and literary conventions, and at making it an almost photographic reflection of life as it really is. Becque's most successful plays, *Michel Paupe*r (1870), *Les Corbeaux* (1882), and *La Parisienne* (1885), are slices of drab and sordid life presented without commentary or didactic purpose. They are innocent of dramatic technique in the ordinary sense of the word, the characters are all of a piece, and the dialogue is unrelieved by that wit or fancy which Augier and Dumas and their disciples had so sedulously cultivated.

The movement which Becque inaugurated on the stage was continued for some ten years after 1885, thanks to the Théâtre Libre (1887–1895). Its founder, André Antoine, who held a small post in a gas company, and was an enthusiastic amateur actor, thought, like Becque, that, even apart from its regrettable didactic tendencies, contemporary drama was untrue to life by reason of its elaborate plots, improbable incidents, and conventional dénouements. He and the young dramatic authors who gathered round him set up as an ideal complete truth to nature in plot, dialogue, setting, and acting, and despised the tradition of the "well-made play" which had set in with Scribe and reached its culminating point with Sardou. Since the performances of the Théâtre Libre were held in a small hall, and were only open to holders of season tickets, they not only escaped the ordinary censorship, but were free to ignore the tastes of the average playgoer. Thus Antoine was in a position

Edmond de  
Goncourt's  
*Henriette  
Maréchale*  
(1865)

HENRI BECQUE  
(1837–1899)

Antoine and  
the Théâtre  
Libre  
(1887–1895)



to give hospitality to the works of French playwrights whose ideas about art were too advanced for the general public. It was he who launched such writers of original talent as Georges Courteline, Georges Ancey, Brioux, and François de Curel, whose subsequent works transcended the bounds of naturalism, and will be dealt with later. Nor did the Théâtre Libre confine itself exclusively to the production of the efforts of the French naturalistic school, for by including in its repertoire specimens of the new foreign drama, it introduced the plays of Tolstoi, Ibsen, and Hauptmann to the French public. In spite of its exaggerated naturalism, the movement, led by Antoine, did the French drama good service by advocating a simplification of dramatic technique, and by objecting to the undue prominence of a thesis and of a didactic intention generally. Even playwrights who kept aloof from the movement—Georges de Porto-Riche, Henri Lavedan, Paul Hervieu, Maurice Donnay, etc.—were not slow in adopting what seemed to them good in the experiments carried out by the Théâtre Libre.

The latest development in the theatrical art of France is seen in the work carried on by the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, founded by Jacques Copeau in 1913. This theatre produces at popular prices, and in a simple setting, the best plays, ancient and modern, French and foreign, and gives a special place in its repertory to plays by new dramatists.



PART II

BETWEEN TWO WARS

MAIN LITERARY CURRENTS (1885-1914)

CHAPTER VII

POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL BACK-  
GROUND (1871-1914)

**A**FTER the ten months of foreign and civil war which constitute "L'Année Terrible," France immediately set herself the double task of establishing a permanent form of government, and of paying off the Germans who occupied the fortified towns along her eastern frontier. During the first five years after the war, under the able leadership of Thiers, the first President of the Third Republic, France gave marvellous proof of vitality. Not only did she, within three years from the capitulation of Paris, hand over the whole war indemnity of £200,000,000 demanded by her late enemy, who had hoped to cripple her financially for a generation at least, but within a remarkably short time she repaired the havoc wrought by the war on railroads, bridges, and public and private buildings, and set to work to develop to the utmost her natural and industrial resources. The International Exhibition held in Paris in 1878, though less splendid than its predecessor of 1867, bore ample witness to the prosperous condition of French trade and industry.

The most difficult problem with which France was con-

fronted immediately after the Franco-Prussian War was that of her future form of government. It seemed as though Legitimists, Orleanists, and Imperialists had almost equal chances of prevailing, and indeed when, in February, 1875, the National Assembly drew up a Constitution for the Republic proclaimed by revolutionary Paris in 1870, so strong was the opposition that the measure was carried by a majority of only one vote. Nevertheless, the Constitution of 1875, with a few slight subsequent adjustments, has endured to the present day, and has had a longer life and a greater degree of stability than any of the six post-revolutionary governments which had preceded it. In matters connected both with home and foreign policy, the line of French presidents, from Thiers to Poincaré, has had innumerable problems to face. Here, however, only a brief reference can be made to such political events as influenced or throw light on the literature of the period.

After the war, and as a consequence of it, there seems to have been a genuine desire for a return to religion among the people at large, "symbolized by the two votive churches which rose on the heights of Fourvières and Montmartre like citadels of prayer protecting the cities of Lyons and Paris."<sup>1</sup> Any real religious revival was, however, checked for many years by the traditional alliance between the Church and political reaction, and the consequent political and clerical intrigues. Gambetta's famous declaration after the elections of 1877, "le Cléricalisme voilà l'ennemi," is the *leitmotiv* of the duel between Church and State, which fills so many pages in all histories of the Third Republic. Open war was first declared in 1879, when Jules Ferry drew up an education bill forbidding members of unauthorized religious orders to teach. It is therefore not surprising that when, ten years later, the Minister of War, General Boulanger, attempted to overthrow the Government, he should have been supported

<sup>1</sup> Guérard : *French Civilization in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 271 (1914).

by the Catholic clergy, who had from the first been hostile to the Republic, fearing, not without reason, that it would sooner or later undermine their authority. Shortly after the Boulangist crisis, the Pope issued an encyclical, the famous *Rerum Novarum*, urging French Catholics to rally to the Republic. A number of Monarchists, led by the Comte de Mun, followed his advice, and formed the party of the "Ralliés." For the moment there seemed some hope of a reconciliation between Church and State. Then in 1894 occurred an incident which stirred up the bitterest animosities of all parties, and which, resolving itself into a military, religious, and political question, was destined to be a turning-point in the national life of France, and consequently to give a new direction to her thought and literature. For eight years—from 1894 to 1906—the Dreyfus affair rent France into angry factions, and in its later stages aroused the interest of the whole civilized world. In order to explain the true inwardness of this famous affair,

The anti-Semite movement

it is necessary to go back a few years. During the early eighties, the anti-Semite movement, which had taken its rise in Germany and Austria, spread to France. The movement was political rather than racial or religious in origin. The European Jews were all concentrated in one class of society—the industrial *bourgeoisie*. Their emancipation in the middle of the nineteenth century coincided with the revolutions which made their class the ruling power in Europe, and as they were its richest and cleverest members, a semblance of a Jewish domination presented itself in countries like Austria and Germany, where the proportion of Jews to the total population was a high one. In France, on the contrary, it was extremely low ; but, on the other hand, the bourgeois Republican régime attracted to that country many financial adventurers, among them not a few German Jews alienated from their own country by the anti-Semite agitations there. The campaign in France was opened by Edouard Drumont, by a book entitled *La France Juive* (1886), written to denounce the

Drumont's  
*France Juive*  
(1886)

supposed evil influence of Jewish financiers on French national life. The book was read eagerly by the general public, who welcomed its explanation of the prevailing corruption, confirmed shortly afterwards by the suspension of the Panama Company, which ruined many thrifty French families who had invested all their savings in the enterprise.

By exposing the Panama scandals in his newly-founded paper, *La Libre Parole*, by attributing the anti-clerical policy of the government to Jewish influence, and by alleging that the Jewish elements in the Army were secret agents in the pay of the national enemy, Drumont secured for his campaign against the Jews not only all classes of small investors, but also all good Catholics and patriots.

In October, 1894, *La Libre Parole* gave great prominence to a concrete case of treason.

The Dreyfus  
affair

Captain Dreyfus, a Jewish artillery officer attached to the General Staff, had been arrested on the charge of betraying important military secrets to Germany. He was tried by court-martial and condemned to perpetual solitary confinement in the Ile du Diable, off the coast of French Guiana. The case attracted little attention at the time, except in so far as it seemed a proof of the soundness of Drumont's theories, and no one outside a small circle of Dreyfus's personal friends raised the question of his possible innocence. But in 1896 rumours began to be circulated that everything had not been regular in the judgment of 1895, and these rumours grew and spread until, in 1898, it was deemed necessary to produce new proofs of the guilt of Dreyfus. Barely a month later, the Chief of the Intelligence Department, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry, confessed to having forged these new proofs, and thereupon committed suicide. In a moment the whole outlook of the question changed, and there was an outburst of indignation throughout the length and breadth of France. Emile Zola wrote an open letter to the War Office, headed *J'Accuse*, in which he accused all the officials connected with the trial and conviction of Dreyfus not only of injustice, but of dishonesty. He himself was tried and condemned for his



indictment, and only escaped punishment by crossing the Channel. Dreyfus was brought back from the Devil's Island and put upon his trial a second time. His old accusers redoubled their efforts to prove him guilty, and in August, 1899, at Rennes, the military court again convicted him of treason by a majority of five votes to two; but this time it was with extenuating circumstances, and almost immediately afterwards M. Waldeck-Rousseau issued a decree granting Dreyfus a full and free pardon, which he accepted. The affair seemed closed, but his personal friends continued the legal agitation until, in 1906, they succeeded in getting the case tried again, this time not by a military tribunal, but by the Cour de Cassation, the supreme court of France, with the result that the whole accusation against Dreyfus was declared to be disproved. His character being thus completely cleared, he was restored to the active list of the Army, promoted to the rank of Major, and made Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur.

Since the Franco-Prussian War and the suppression of the Commune, no event in the political life of France had caused feeling to run so high as this famous affair. During the ten years which it took to win the victory for common sense and humanity, the struggle was not merely a question between those who thought Dreyfus innocent and those who thought him guilty, but was complicated by the fact that many people used the affair as a means of supporting or attacking certain definite political principles. The anti-Dreyfusards included not only a small number of people who sincerely thought that Dreyfus was a traitor, but a large number of anti-Republicans and strong Nationalists and bigoted Catholics, who felt that this was an opportunity for defending their race and their traditions.

The Dreyfusards, on the other hand, included, apart from those who believed in the innocence of Dreyfus, without any religious or political bias, all the internationalists, free-thinkers, and socialists, together with the best liberal element in the country, eager to uphold liberty and justice at all costs. These men,

Moral effects  
of the Dreyfus  
case



and they represented the noblest minds of France, held that truth must be told and justice done, even if it should cast a slur on such grand old national institutions as the Church and the Army. Yet when the Dreyfusards had won the day, these men, who were neither irreligious nor pacifists, saw their triumph resulting in a political majority which would fain have done away with the Army and the Church altogether, and they and the rising generation, whom they influenced, bent all their best efforts towards giving a definite direction to two ideals already in the air—a movement of national renaissance, and a revival of the Catholic faith unhampered by clericalism. Well might one of the most heroic defenders of the cause of Dreyfus—Charles Péguy—who long kept the symbolical aspect of the affair alive, write in his *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* :

“L’Affaire Dreyfus aura dans l’histoire du monde au moins la valeur morale d’une guerre et sans doute la valeur morale d’une révolution.”

Few were the men of letters and learning who did not give some sort of utterance to their opinions either during or after the event. Zola’s last novel, *Vérité* (1903), is a parable of the Dreyfus case. It inspired the last three volumes of Anatole France’s novel sequence—*Histoire Contemporaine* (1897–1901), his *Crainquebille* (1901), and his *Ile des Pingouins* (1908). It is the theme of Romain Rolland’s play, *Les Loups* (1909), and it moved Maurice Barrès to write his *Scènes et Doctrines du Nationalisme* (1902).

Politically, the Dreyfus affair had the immediate effect of creating an alliance, known as the *bloc*, among the Republicans of all shades of opinion, including the Socialists, for the purpose of reducing the political importance of the Army and the Church. In 1901, Waldeck-Rousseau’s Association Law was passed, requiring any association, political, social, or religious, to apply for Government authorization, and forbidding the members of any unauthorized religious order

Its political  
results

to teach in schools. Under the ministry of Combes, a rabid anti-cleric, bitterly hostile to the Church of which he had been a minister, the Association Law was used as a means of suppressing, rather than of regulating, religious orders. Authorization was rarely given, and in 1904 a further law forbade even authorized orders to teach. As a result, two thousand four hundred schools were closed before the end of the year.

This attack on the religious orders was only the prelude to the final separation between Church and State, which took place in 1905. The separation law expressly abolished the Concordat of 1801, and declared that the Republic no longer recognized nor subsidized any religious organization.

There can be little doubt that the anti-religious policy of the Combes ministry—for it was far more than anti-clerical—was not without its effect on the recent Catholic revival in France among the cultured classes, for “the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.”

The religious question, though far from being the only matter with which French politicians of the eighties and nineties had to deal, was nevertheless the one which loomed largest throughout the history of the Third Republic before 1914, and the one which it is most necessary to understand if one is to realize the mental attitude of the rising generation of Frenchmen during the first fourteen years of this century.<sup>1</sup>

Though France made such a speedy material recovery after the defeat of 1870, her spiritual and intellectual recovery was far slower. It has often been pointed out that the war neither interrupted nor modified the prevailing tendencies in French literature and thought. That the positivist and realistic spirit remained the dominant influence during the first twenty years after the war is amply proved

<sup>1</sup> A novel written during the war, Roger Martin du Gard's *Jean Barois*, is an excellent study of the passions aroused by the Dreyfus case.

by the fact that a large proportion of the works studied in the preceding sections were written during those twenty years. Setting on one side the few masterpieces directly inspired by the events of 1870, such as certain short stories by Daudet and Maupassant and Zola's *Débâcle*, it would be difficult to distinguish which of the works by men of letters who had already made their names previous to 1870 were written before or after that date.

An exception, however, must be made in the case of Taine and Renan. Though they neither of them ever reconsidered their determinist philosophy, which for many years to come was to remain the chief mental pabulum of the cultured classes in France, "the double catastrophe of the defeat and the Commune . . . brought it home to them that, in spite of their long years of intellectual aloofness, they belonged to a community of men and not of pure spirits."<sup>1</sup> Though they had both been revolutionaries in their respective ways—neither had ever believed in democracy—they now both became reactionists, convinced of the value of the national tradition. Taine spent the remainder of his life on the six volumes of his *Origines de la France Contemporaine*, in which he sets out to prove that the Revolution was a mistake and a failure because it so completely refused to recognize the value of tradition, and instead of compromising and patching up in the English fashion, destroyed completely in order to build anew. Renan summarized his political views in *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France* (1871), an indictment of democracy and an apology for government by the enlightened few, which might be summarized in a sentence of his own: "La conservation de la civilisation est une œuvre aristocrate." In his later works Renan reveals an irony and a cynicism, at times even a flippancy, which the shattering of his dearest illusions about Germany undoubtedly helped to develop. For him, as for Cousin,

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Dimnet: *France Herself Again* (1914), and *passim*; cf. also Bourget: *Nouvelles Pages de Critique et de Doctrine*, vol. ii (1922).

Michelet, and Taine, Germany had been a kind of intellectual and spiritual home, and until the war of 1870 German philosophy and learning had exercised in France an influence comparable only to that of Italy during the sixteenth century and England during the Age of Enlightenment. This influence was only temporarily interrupted by the war, for hard on the heels of defeat came the gloomy philosophy of Schopenhauer (d. 1860), which began to become popular in France about 1875. According to Schopenhauer, life is not worth living on its own merits. Two extraneous things alone make it liveable—art, which transcends life and lifts its creators and contemplators on to another plane; and philosophy, “which, as it were, blunts the sting of life by the contemplation of the essentially unreal nature of the universe.” This was to a great extent the attitude of the early symbolists, who had been brought up on Schopenhauer as well as on Taine and Renan.

To return to the results of the war of 1870. They are already to be seen in part in the attitude of the literary generation which was just reaching manhood when the war broke out—Bourget, Loti, Anatole France, Melchior de Vogüé, etc.; but still more fully in the next, which was beginning to leave childish things behind it in 1885 or thereabouts. Bourget, in his *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* (1883 and 1885), makes a kind of moral inventory of the pessimism, sometimes sombre, sometimes flippant, of his own and the succeeding generation, a pessimism which was partly the outcome of a materialistic philosophy, partly the result of the defeat of 1870. Convinced as he is that “les états de l’âme particulière à une génération sont enveloppés en germe dans les théories et les rêves de la génération précédente,” he makes a careful study of the works read by the youth of his day—*Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Madame Bovary*, *La Fille Elisa*, etc.—and finds in all of them “une mortelle fatigue de vivre, une morne perception de la vanité de tout effort.”<sup>1</sup> He further points out that what he calls “la ferocité de la vie” had

<sup>1</sup> *Nouveaux Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* (Preface).



been early brought home to his own generation by the national disaster, which had been a victory for brute-force. Hence their pessimism was complicated by a sense of powerlessness, so strong that in the eighties and early nineties there was much talk in intellectual circles and a whole library of books written about the decadence of the Latin races in general, and of France in particular. A group of poets was not even averse from bearing the name *Décadents*, the idea being that the most idealistic and cultured nations and individuals are doomed to go under. For a decade or more it was the fashion among French intellectuals to admire foreign nations and to belittle France. This national despondency, which sometimes paraded under the false name of internationalism, could not fail to have bad consequences, springing as it did from a morbid lack of faith in the perennial qualities of France.

But no nation can live on negations for ever. By 1885 France had been doing so for over thirty years, and she was to continue to do so for a good many years more, but already a new and more optimistic note was beginning to make itself heard. Four important books, written during the eighties, reveal a definite reaction against the spirit of the age<sup>1</sup>—Amiel's *Fragments d'un Journal Intime* (1883-1884), a spiritual autobiography; <sup>2</sup> Brunetière's *Roman Naturaliste* (1882), which rings the death-knell of Zola and his school; Melchior de Vogüé's *Roman Russe* (1886), with its championship of a humaner and more poetic realism than the French novel had hitherto achieved; and Paul Bourget's psychological novel, *Le Disciple* (1889), the preface to which asserts the importance of the spiritual as against the material element in man's nature—while the story itself is an indictment of the practical moral consequences of Taine's determinist philosophy.

In the early nineties, when symbolism and all that it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gaston Riou: *Aux Ecoutes de la France qui vient* (1915), p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> "Fais le testament de ta pensée et de ton cœur, c'est ce que tu, peux faire de plus utile."—*Journal*, 3 mai, 1849.



stood for as a reaction against excessive positiveness and materialism was still the privilege of the few, came the Dreyfus crisis, the far-reaching results of which have already been indicated. In combination with other causes, some of them of a philosophical order, this great crisis inaugurated a new epoch in French literature and thought, which ended with the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, and which is characterized, in contradistinction to the pessimism, scepticism, and over-intellectualism of the preceding period, by its optimism, its faith, and its conviction of the liveableness of a life of effort and action.

Needless to say, this change of attitude had been long preparing, though it may fairly be said that the Dreyfus case very greatly speeded its progress; nor was it immediately felt by France herself, much less by foreigners. Indeed, we find an English journalist writing in 1899:

"After the Revolution, when the whole fabric of society was swept away, there was a great faith wherewith to build everything anew and again after the miracle of Napoleon. In 1899, after the Dreyfus case, the great institutions of France still stand, but everybody knows them to be undermined. There is no faith, and because there is no faith there will be no miracle."<sup>1</sup>

But the journalists were wrong; faith was dawning, and the miracle came.

In a series of interesting studies entitled *L'Attitude du Lyrisme Contemporain*, Tancred de Visan (2) 1890-1914 points out the strong resemblances which Philosophical influences exist between the French symbolist movement of the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the German romantic school of 1785, of which the chief representatives were Novalis, Tieck, and Schlegel, all three strongly influenced by the idealist philosophy of Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling, whose philosophy was a reaction against the materialism and over-intellectualism of the *Aufklärung*, just as symbolism was a reaction against these same characteristics in the literature and thought of France during

<sup>1</sup> T. W. Stevens: *The Tragedy of Dreyfus*, 1899.

the third quarter of last century. Whether this was a question of direct influence or not it is hard to say, but to see that Fichte's and Hegel's ideas were well known in the intellectual France of the eighties, one has only to consult the *Revue Indépendante* (1884-1885), and the *Revue Wagnérienne* (1815-1887), or the works of the two admitted leaders of the symbolist movement, Villiers de l'Isle Adam and Mallarmé. It is worth noting, too, that the first complete French translation of the works of Novalis came from the pen of Maurice Maeterlinck in 1895.

The tendency of German idealistic philosophy, from Fichte through Hegel and Schelling to Schopenhauer, to regard spontaneous feeling as superior to logical intelligence, was eagerly seized upon by a generation, who, though convinced that life was evil, were equally tired of the "slice of life" of the naturalists, and of the impassive and sculptural methods of the Parnassians.

Therefore, when Bergson came with the announcement that men misread or misinterpreted the ceaseless flux of life and nature by adopting the purely intellectual attitude appropriate for the scientist but not for the philosopher, and in *Les Données immédiates de la Conscience* (1887), *Matière et Mémoire* (1898), and *L'Evolution Créatrice* (1908) brilliantly and poetically vindicated intuition and all those manifestations of the spirit for which neither reason nor science can account, his teaching did not fall upon stony ground. Symbolist poetry, with its dreamy suggestiveness and its attempt to express the inexpressible, came before the triumph of the Bergsonian philosophy, and certainly before there could have been any question of its influence; but by the value Bergson attaches to intuition and to subconscious states of mind, and by his conception of life as a continuous rhythmical becoming, he formulated, and therefore strengthened, the mental attitude of his own generation. On the younger generation, which reached manhood at the dawn of the twentieth century, the influence of Bergson was still stronger. His belief that society is not a creation of pure

Henri Bergson  
(b. 1859)

reason, nor the result of any "social contract," but the creation of time, and thus "a complex indivisible whole, in which every citizen is the continuation of his forefathers,"<sup>1</sup> helps to explain the value attached by these younger writers to their national heritage and their national traditions, while his conviction that the intelligence so useful in the domain of matter is a hindrance rather than a help in understanding life and the things of the spirit, was partly responsible for the change of the attitude of the intellectual classes towards religion. One of his chief disciples, M. Lotte, writes :

"Je ne sais plus quel Athénien, dans le Banquet de Platon, déclare qu'il ne vit vraiment que depuis qu'il a connu Platon ; j'en dirais autant de Bergson, si, depuis que je l'ai connu, je n'étais redevenu chrétien. . . . Je n'oublierai jamais l'émotion dont me transporta *L'Evolution Créatrice* : j'y sentais Dieu à chaque page."

In the book here mentioned life is represented as a continuous streaming forth of creative energy and every individual effort as a part of the rhythm of the universe, and the obvious deduction that students of Bergson drew from it was that all energy and effort is worth while, and that the world, therefore, is a very liveable place.

The cult of action and energy, and of the heroic virtues generally, had already been preached by Nietzsche (1844-1900), who enjoyed a certain vogue in France before the Great War, mainly because he gave voice to the revolt of those who were inclined to think that life was a good thing after all, and because he believed in the capacity possessed, by an elect few at least, of working out their own salvation. Since the war it has been the fashion in France, as elsewhere, to deny the influence of Nietzsche beyond the frontiers of Germany, yet the Futurist attitude is essentially Nietzschean, and even those writers who would have scorned to emulate him, caught something of his frenzy for life and his delight in the beauty of strength. M. Bordeau, in *Nietzsche et la Religion de la Force*, attacks the doctrine of the superman who, by his

<sup>1</sup> Turquet Milne : *Some Modern French Writers* (1921), passim.

pride and selfishness, raises himself above the crowd for purposes of domination ; but he admits, on the other hand, that “ la philosophie de Nietzsche s’offre comme antidote à la maladie du siècle, au pessimisme découragé, au dégoût de la vie.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

(c. 1885-1900)

SYMBOLISM, as a literary movement, has both a negative and a positive side. In its negative aspect it represents a reaction against the introduction of the scientific spirit into literature and against the limited vision and cold plastic form of Parnassian poetry; in its positive aspect it has been defined as "an attempt to evoke the subconscious element of life, to set vibrating the infinity within us by the exquisite juxtaposition of images,"<sup>1</sup> and, one might add, by the subtle suggestiveness of mere sound. Symbolism became a conscious movement some fifteen years after the defeat of 1870, just as romanticism crystallized into a school some fifteen years after the fall of the Empire.

Its immediate precursors were three poets, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine, who, standing somewhat apart from the general literary tendencies of their age, struck a new chord which was to sound loud and long, and to multiply its echoes in the lyrics of the next generation.

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1868), who was old enough to have been the father of the other two, devoted an otherwise unedifying life to writing one book of verse, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), one book of faultless imaginative prose, *Les Paradis Artificiels* (1859), and *Les Petits Poèmes en Prose*

<sup>1</sup> F. S. Flint: *Poetry Review*, August, 1912.



(1868), later collected in one volume ; some art criticism, in which he both attacks the conventional idea of beauty (*Salon de 1845*) and defends imagination and the poet's dream against realism (*L'Art Romantique*, 1868) ; and a translation of Poe's *Tales*, which makes quite as fine reading as the original. At first Baudelaire was ranged among the Parnassians, because he contributed his *Nouvelles Fleurs du Mal* to their anthology, and because he not only shared their scrupulous attitude towards art, but was firmly convinced of the superiority of form over content. At one time, too, the realists sought to claim him because of certain pictures of crude ugliness and triviality in his poems, "le réalisme macabre," for which Victor Hugo praised him ; but if Baudelaire is to be placed in any group, it ought to be among the symbolists, for though his genius is expressive rather than suggestive, "le but qu'il poursuit n'est pas de traduire une idée mais de provoquer chez le lecteur un état d'âme."<sup>1</sup> For Baudelaire was a man of very subtle sensations and fond of noting the delicate connections between those of hearing, sight, and scent.

"Sans avoir recours à l'opium," he wrote in 1855, "qui n'a connu des admirables heures . . . où les sons tintent musicalement, où les couleurs parlent, où les parfums racontent des mondes d'idées." And again in his famous sonnet entitled *Correspondances* :

"La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles ;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent  
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité  
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,  
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent."

Thus for Baudelaire the whole universe is full of hidden

<sup>1</sup> Barre : *Le Symbolisme*, 1911.

meanings, of signs to be interpreted, of elements of thought, of symbols of the spiritual life.

*Les Fleurs du Mal* traces the steady progress of the poet's heart and mind towards a more and more sinister *ennui*, the disease of an inordinate craving for new and strange sensations and of an insatiable imagination :

*Les Fleurs  
du Mal  
(1857)*

“ Mon âme est un tombeau que, mauvais cénobite,  
Depuis l'éternité je parcours et j'habite.”

And again :

“ J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans . . .  
Rien n'égale la longueur des boiteuses journées,  
Quand sous les lourds flocons des neigeuses années  
L'ennui, fruit de la morne incuriosité,  
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité.”

—*Spleen et Idéal*, lxxvi.

The subject is a dreary one, yet the poems which develop it are the work of a man who, in his own words—

“ Trébuchant sur les mots comme sur les pavés,  
Heurtant parfois des vers depuis longtemps rêvés ”—

records his delicate sensations with that subtle mingling of music and imagery which spells pure poetry (cf. *Harmonie du Soir, A la très chère, à la très belle*).

Baudelaire's imagery is rich and rare, though not very varied. For instance, he is very fond of comparing the beauty of a woman to certain effects of the sky on the atmosphere :

“ Tu contiens dans ton œil le couchant et l'aurore ;  
Tu répands des parfums comme un soir orageux.”

And again in his impassioned cry to the “ Venus noire ” :

“ Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne  
O vase de tristesse, ô grande taciturne.”

His verse is more musical than that of any preceding French poet since the Pleiad—with the notable exception of Racine and Lamartine. The beauty of his poetry owes much to

his suggestive use of assonance and alliteration—that “prosodie mystérieuse” which he admired so much in English poetry, and by means of which he expresses the minor or major key of his mood. A few examples must suffice—others will be found on every page of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

“Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,  
Défilent lentement dans mon âme.”

“Des rires effrénés mêlés aux sombres pleurs. . . .”

“L’air est plein du frisson des choses qui s’enfuient.”

Baudelaire’s weakness as a poet lies in the fact that the fine passages such as these, on whose strangely haunting quality his greatness rests, are short and somewhat isolated. His poetry has been defined as “une somptueuse prose aux allures liturgiques et étonnamment versifiée.”<sup>1</sup> He himself seems to have felt that he could be a greater poet in prose than in verse, and soon after the publication of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, he began to write for various reviews his *Petits Poèmes en Prose* (1868), which are not mere rhythmical pictures in the style of Aloysius Bertrand’s *Gaspard de la Nuit* (1842), which gave him the idea of his prose poems, but a delightful blend of the real and the ideal, and full of the thought which their author often found it difficult to express in verse. It has been said that contemporary French poetry proceeds almost entirely from Baudelaire, but if this is the case, it was through the intermediary of one who was greater than he, of one who was perhaps the most perfect singer that France has ever known—Paul Verlaine.

Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), whose father came from the Belgian Ardennes, and whose mother was a native of French Flanders, was born at Metz. His life is a pitiful record of aimless vagabondage and dissipation, interspersed with periods of repentance

*Petits Poèmes  
en Prose  
(1868)*

PAUL VERLAINE  
(1844–1896)

<sup>1</sup> A. Poizat: *Le Symbolisme* (1919), p. 60.

and remorse. The last eleven years of his life were spent on and off in the hospitals of Paris, and he died in poverty and in squalid surroundings.

Verlaine's early collection of verse, *Les Poèmes Saturniens* (1866), is written in the impassive and objective style of the Parnassian school, but both the title and many of the individual poems show the influence of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, which, according to Lepelletier, his friend and chosen biographer, Verlaine used to read surreptitiously under the lid of his desk at school. Artistically superior, but written in the same impersonal vein, are the *Fêtes Galantes* (1869), charming vignettes of the manners and amusements of eighteenth-century Versailles. Verlaine first freed himself from the Parnassian tradition and struck a purely personal note in *La Bonne Chanson* (1870), a collection of twenty-six poems, nearly all of them addressed to his fiancée, Matilde Mauté de Fleurville. This "fleur dans un obus," as Victor Hugo characteristically styled it, because it appeared during the war, already gives a foretaste of the essential Verlaine, and contains the exquisite *Lune Blanche*, later set to music by Debussy. The same year he married, and shortly afterwards came under the influence of the boy-genius, Arthur Rimbaud, ten years his junior, who had already written some of his extraordinary poems. The two friends, both vagabonds at heart, set out on an aimless wandering from Paris to Belgium, and thence across the Channel to London, where they spent the better part of 1872 and 1873—Rimbaud writing his *Illuminations*, Verlaine his *Romances sans Paroles* (1874), which, besides many delightful fugitive impressions of Belgian towns (*Walcourt, Charleroi, Chevaux de Bois*, etc.), and of London streets, contains many poems inspired by a melancholy regret for the wife whom he had deserted but could not forget (*Il pleure dans mon cœur; O triste, triste était mon âme*, etc.), a regret which transformed itself into a tone of gentle reproach when he heard that she had insti-

tuted proceedings for a legal separation (*Child-wife, Birds in the Night*).

The friendship with Rimbaud was destined to end in disaster. In 1873 Verlaine was tried and sentenced at Brussels to two years' imprisonment for attempting to shoot the friend who had decided to say good-bye to him for ever.

The central fact of Verlaine's sixteen months' imprisonment in the gaol at Mons was his sincere, if only poetically fruitful, reconversion to the Catholic faith, to which we owe the beautiful poems of *Sagesse* (1881), which has been described as "one of the greatest books of religious verse in the world." Scattered among the mystic elevations of *Sagesse* there are other poems in which the religious inspiration is less obvious, full of a serene and quiet beauty, poems of which the following is a typical example :

"Un grand sommeil noir  
Tombe sur ma vie :  
Dormez tout Espoir,  
Dormez toute Envie !"

Je ne vois plus rien  
Je perds la mémoire  
Du mal et du bien . . .  
O la triste histoire.

Je suis un berceau  
Qu'une main balance  
Au creux d'un caveau . . .  
Silence, silence !"

Others, again, suggest the few sights and sounds of the outside world which reached him in his cell (*Le Ciel est pardessus le toit, si bleu, si calme, Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois*, etc.). The poems contained in *Sagesse* were not the only ones which Verlaine composed in prison. There exists a manuscript entitled *Cellulairement*,<sup>1</sup> which contains some

<sup>1</sup> Cf. article by Ernest Dupuy (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, December 1, 1912).



twenty poems written by him while he was at Mons, and afterwards distributed among his later collections—*Jadis et Naguère* (1884), *Parallèlement* (1889), and *Bonheur* (1891).

Verlaine is one of those poets rare in France, who "do but sing because they must," and such theories as he suggests in his *Art Poétique* of nine short stanzas were those most suited to one whose genius was entirely lyrical, and who delighted above all things in capturing fugitive moods and passing impressions. Take, for example, the wonderful *Impression Fausse* in *Parallèlement*. He was the first French poet to recognize that the lyric is the most immaterial form of literary art and the most nearly akin to music. And indeed his own poems have the haunting and elusive quality of the folk-song; they are, as he himself so charmingly puts it in *Crimen Amoris*:

"Les choses qui chantent dans la tête  
Alors que la mémoire est absente,  
Ecoutez c'est notre sang qui chante . . .  
O Musique lointaine et discrète."

It is this musical element in his poetry that makes it almost as impossible to quote Verlaine a few lines at a time as it is impossible to convey any impression by picking out a few notes from a melody. He is, moreover, the poet of half-lights, the wistful minor key, and of the word half spoken, which opens up a vista of thoughts and imaginings beyond itself. When we read Verlaine, or, better still, when we hear him read, it is always as though the poet said to us in the unforgettable opening lines of the poem with which he sent *Sagesse* as a peace-offering to his wife:

"Ecoutez la chanson bien douce  
Qui ne pleure que pour vous plaire."

And when we leave him it is always with the feeling which he again so admirably expresses in another poem:

"Dans une rue, au cœur d'une ville de rêve  
Ce sera comme quand on a déjà vécu ;

Un instant à la fois très vague et très aigu . . .  
O le soleil parmi la brume qui se lève.

. . . . .

Ce sera comme quand on rêve et qu'on s'éveille  
Et que l'on se réveille et que l'on rêve encor  
De la même féerie et du même décor,  
L'été dans l'herbe, au bruit moiré d'un vol d'abeille."

Verlaine's violent and abnormal friend, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), who between the ages of sixteen and nineteen composed all the poetry he was ever to write, was, after his rupture with the older poet, turn by turn a teacher of French in London and Stuttgart, a wanderer begging his way on foot from St. Gothard to Milan and Leghorn, a dockyard hand at Marseilles, a mercenary soldier with Dutch troops bound for Java and Sumatra, an interpreter on a British merchant ship sailing for Liverpool, a pressgang agent in Holland, a cashier in a travelling circus in Sweden, and a quarry overseer in Cyprus. In 1880 he abandoned what he has called "l'Europe aux anciens parapets" and worked his way through Egypt to Aden, and thence up into Abyssinia, where he was one of the pioneers of European commercial adventure. At Harrar, on the east coast of Africa, he established himself as a trader in coffee, perfumes, ivory, and gold, treating the natives with great justice and humanity, and trying to instil into them all that was good in European civilization, until he finally became a kind of semi-independent chieftain, leading many expeditions into unknown parts of Northern Africa, and intriguing with the French Government in favour of Menelik and against Italy. In 1891 a tumour on the knee obliged Rimbaud to return to Europe for surgical advice, and the same year he died in hospital at Marseilles.

Both by reason of his adventures in real life and of his adventures in poetry, Rimbaud is one of the most curious figures in French literature. Among the poems he wrote when he was barely sixteen are *Le Bal des Pendus*, a macabre fantasy which might have been signed by Villon, and the

ARTHUR  
RIMBAUD  
(1854-1891)

extraordinary *Bateau Ivre*, in which the poet becomes "a beaten and wandering ship flying in a sort of intoxication before the wind over undiscovered seas." *Les Illuminations*, written during his wanderings with Verlaine, consist of a series of prose poems interspersed with occasional pieces in verse. The title is well chosen, for, violent and obscure as they are, they are every now and again traversed by a flash of vivid light (cf. the prose poems *Aube* and the section entitled *Villes*, a picture of what the great world-cities of the future will be). To almost all Rimbaud's poems, whether in prose or verse, might be applied the remark which Claudel makes about their author's last composition, *Une Saison en Enfer*, a spiritual autobiography in which experience and prophecy meet and mingle. "La marche de la pensée . . . procède, non plus par développement logique mais, comme chez un musicien, par dessins mélodiques." For Rimbaud is as musical and as suggestive as Verlaine, though the suggestions of his music are far less easy to understand.

Rimbaud, both as a man and as an artist, has been compared to Nietzsche's superman. Not only have the visions in *Une Saison en Enfer* and parts of *Illuminations* a certain affinity with *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, but their author, having formulated his ideal, set forth into the world to live it to the full. For this visionary was also a man of action—or, to quote Arthur Symons: "He was a dreamer, but all his dreams were discoveries. . . . And having suggested, with some impatience, half the things that his own and the next generation were to busy themselves with developing, he gave up writing as an inadequate form."<sup>1</sup>

The tendency, represented in varying degrees by Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Rimbaud, to strip poetry of rhetoric and of everything extraneous to itself and to vie with the musician rather than with the painter or the sculptor, was by about 1885 beginning to assume the proportions of a movement, the latest development in French literature to which such a term can be applied, for the many odd groupings which

THE SYM-  
BOLIST  
MOVEMENT  
(c. 1885-1900)

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Symons: *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*.

coexisted during the first fourteen years of the twentieth century were all its heirs, while the older generation of contemporary writers are for the most part wholly or half-repentant symbolists. By the end of the century the symbolists had produced a coherent system of æsthetic theory and applied their principles in a body of verse on the whole remarkable for its incoherency, but containing many a masterpiece. Though first and foremost a poetical movement, symbolism also found its way into the novel and the drama.

Its early history In the early eighties, a group of young idealists, counting Jean Moréas and Maurice Barrès among their number, exasperated by the devotion to external beauty, rare epithets, and rich rime of the Parnassian school, and disgusted with the naturalism of Zola's "Epopée de l'animalité humaine," announced in various manifestos their intention of revolutionizing poetry. Before long they gathered round Stéphane Mallarmé, whose beautiful though difficult *Après-midi d'un Faune* had been rejected by the Parnasse Contemporain of 1875. Mallarmé's wonderful talk seems to have been as lucid as his writings were often obscure, and for some twenty years his rooms in the Rue de Rome became the centre of the artistic life of Paris.

At first the new poets were branded as Décadents, and the epithet seems to have pleased them for a time, reminding them, no doubt, of Verlaine's much-admired lines :

" Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la Décadence  
Qui regarde passer les grands barbares blancs  
En composant des acrostiches indolents "

—lines which admirably expressed the languorous attitude of a generation who, in the words of one of its representatives, were over-conscious of the prosaic side of the Third Republic, which in their eyes " portait en elle le vice original d'être née dans le défaite, d'être le gouvernement d'une France humiliée et à peu près résignée." <sup>1</sup> Later, however, they

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Poizat : *Le Symbolisme* (1919).



repudiated the epithet "decadent" in favour of the more comprehensive, though not altogether illuminating, term "symbolist," to which they gave a somewhat unusual meaning. As the writings of the new poets were not welcomed by the old-established reviews, they soon found it necessary to found periodicals of their own. Rémy de Gourmont, the official critic of the symbolists, and a poet himself, enumerates over one hundred and thirty ephemeral reviews founded by them between 1885 and 1895, and his list is far from being complete. One outlived the movement, the *Mercure de France*, which from small beginnings in 1889 had by 1895 become the official organ of the symbolists, besides establishing a publishing firm which still flourishes to-day, and which has the copyright of nearly all the authors belonging to the symbolist group.

In a short sketch like this it is quite impossible to go into the very large question of the theories upon which the symbolists based their practice.<sup>1</sup> Let it suffice to say here that their essential reform consisted in stripping poetry of everything but its purely musical and spiritual elements, and using these almost entirely for their suggestive value.

"Suggerer, voilà la rêve," says Mallarmé; "c'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole." Words are at best but clumsy interpreters of the subtle and complex modern mind, and therefore the poets of this school use the symbol, not as their predecessors had done, with a view to making themselves clearer and more readily understood, but rather in order to blur their thoughts or sensations, to take all

<sup>1</sup> For an understanding of what symbolism meant to the young poets themselves, the following critical works are indispensable:—Rémy de Gourmont: *Le Livre des Masques* (two series) and *Promenades Littéraires* (five series). Robert de Souza: *La Poésie Populaire et le Lyrisme Sentimental* (1899). Tancrède de Visan: *Essai sur le Symbolisme* (Pref. to *Paysages Introspectifs*, 1904) and *L'Attitude du Lyrisme Contemporain* (1911). Tancrède de Visan was the first to point out the similarity between the symbolist attitude and the philosophy of Bergson.



precision and definition from them, for to define is to limit. In a passage of his admirable book on general æsthetics, *Le Tourment de l'Unité*, M. Adrien Mithouard explains the desire for simplification which underlay this cult of suggestion :

“ Un siècle de science, dix siècles d'art, plusieurs millénaires d'aventures et d'occasions nous ont conféré une multiple expérience. Notre curiosité sans limites étend partout ses antennes. . . . L'art est aujourd'hui désseminé par toute la vie et il prétend désormais à être expressif de tout. Nous voici arrivés à l'extrême de l'expression. Une œuvre parfaitement achevée risquerait aujourd'hui de nous froisser, tant il lui faudrait nier et omettre de choses pour se parfaire. . . . C'est un symptôme : le charme de l'inachevé nous mène. . . . Comme ils désespèrent des ordonnances minutieusement définitives, faute d'y consigner tout ce qui les tourmente, les artistes s'efforcent à suggérer ce qu'ils ne réussiraient pas à finir d'exprimer.”<sup>1</sup>

Now music is the most suggestive of all the arts—the one which can most easily call up and prolong the echoes of an emotion and set the listener dreaming—and it was almost entirely to music that the poets of the eighties and nineties went for their inspiration. Hitherto literary men had been much more interested in the plastic arts than in music, the romantics and realists in painting, the Parnassians in sculpture. Their successors, on the other hand, were intensely interested in music. “ Nous étions nourris de musique,” writes Paul Valéry, “ et nos têtes littéraires ne rêvaient que de tirer du langage presque les mêmes effets que les causes purement sonores produisaient sur nos êtres nerveux. Les uns, Wagner ; les autres chérissaient Schumann.”<sup>2</sup> This tendency to render musical impressions and to imitate in verse certain points of musical technique was no doubt due to the influence of Wagner, on whom Baudelaire had written an enthusiastic study for the *Revue Européenne* as early as 1861, and whose music was popularized in Paris by the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Eccles: *La Liquidation du Romantisme*, 1919.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to Lucien Fabre's *Connaissance de la Déesse*, 1922.

famous Concerts Lamoureux, founded in 1881 by the violinist and conductor of that name. At the same time the theories of the great musician were promulgated by the *Revue Wagnérienne* (1885-1887), which sang the praises of Wagner not only as a musician, but as a poet and dramatist, and which aimed at talking poetry to musicians and music to poets. Now Wagner not only preached and practised spirituality in art and regarded the artist as a creator of religious symbols, but he also believed that the time had come for a fusion of all the arts, and in his libretti he treats the German language as though it were music. The endeavour of the symbolists to "reprendre à la musique leur bien"—the phrase is Mallarmé's—caused them to seek their poetical effects less in the meaning of the words and phrases they used than in their sound and rhythm. Hence their fondness for alliteration, and more especially for assonance, which they frequently use instead of rime, because, when chosen by a trained ear, it is more subtly and delicately musical.

With the same musical end in view, many symbolists abandoned the regular cadence of the twelve-syllable line and, making the strophe the element of their song, built it up of lines of unequal rhythm, the greater or lesser length of line being determined by the natural pauses for breath and by the swift or slow phrasing demanded by the emotion expressed. These two innovations in prosody, the substitution of assonances for rime and the rhythmic variety of the strophe, taken singly or together, constitute what is generally known as *vers libre*.

The way had already been prepared by the romantics, who, with their free use of *enjambement*, had made the rhythmical sentence either longer or shorter than the line, and still more by Verlaine, who, by his free rime system and his unequal rhythms, carried out the suggestion offered in his own *Art Poétique* :

"De la musique avant toute chose  
Et pour cela préfère l'impair

Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air  
 Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou pose."

The first *vers libres* were written simultaneously by Jules Laforgue and Gustave Kahn, whose *Complaintes* and *Palais Nomades* were published in 1885 and 1887 respectively. The form was later adopted by Jean Moréas<sup>1</sup> and Henri de Régnier, who both abandoned it after a time, and was consistently used by Vielé-Griffin, Verhaeren, Francis Jammes, and a host of lesser poets. Critics hostile to the free-verse movement and all that it stood for lay great stress on the number of foreign names in the ranks of the school. It is not immaterial, they say, that Jean Moréas was a Greek, Gustave Kahn a Jew; that Jules Laforgue, though of French blood, was born in Montevideo; that Verhaeren was a Fleming, and that Vielé-Griffin and Stuart Merrill were North Americans by birth and half-English by ancestry. The influence of Walt Whitman has been invoked, and it is true that a certain number of his poems, translated by Jules Laforgue, appeared in *La Vogue* of 1886, and three more by Francis Vielé-Griffin in the *Revue Indépendante* of 1888. But there was no complete French translation of *The Leaves of Grass* until 1909. Whitman's description of his own poetry in the preface would fit almost any symbolist, and there is little doubt that when his influence came it strengthened an already existing attitude. For Whitman and the symbolists had certain common sources of inspiration. They were both adherents of the German idealistic philosophers, and they were both enthusiastic admirers of Wagner and Edgar Allan Poe. The latter, whose tales had had the honour of a translation by Baudelaire, 1856-1864, and whose poems appeared in Mallarmé's translation in 1888—*The Raven* already in 1875—was greatly admired for the elusive music of his verse,

<sup>1</sup> Jean Moréas (1856-1910), a symbolist with all his heart in *Le Pèlerin Passionné* (1891), had, by the time he composed *Les Stances* (1899-1901), become the founder of the so-called "Ecole romane," which preached a return to classical metre and to classical simplicity.

while his essays undoubtedly provided the early symbolists with some of their poetic principles.<sup>1</sup>

Closely connected with the desire to substitute suggestion for description, and to evoke moods and feelings by the music of words and of rhythm, are other characteristics of symbolist poetry upon which there is no space to enlarge here—for instance, the fondness for making colours, sounds, and perfumes convertible sensations, of which a striking though somewhat extreme example is to be found in Henri de Régnier's *Songe de la Forêt*:

“ J'entends sur l'étang chanter votre oiseau d'or :  
 Le bois clair se gemme de voix de pierreries,  
 De voix de diamants, de voix de rubis, de voix de saphirs,  
 Et le chant s'exhale plus riche à se fleurir  
 Et l'oiseau semblait crier des pierreries.”

The intensely individualistic tendency of symbolist poetry connects it with romanticism—with this difference, however, that for the symbolist poetry is not a mere outlet for his personal emotions, but, in the words of Rémy de Gourmont, a means of revealing to others “la sorte de monde qui se mire en son miroir individuel.” The excesses, too—that is to say, its frequent formlessness and obscurity—are the excesses of an intense individualism, bent on speaking its own language and careless who understands. As a militant theory, symbolism has had its day. But this “chaotic adventure,” as it has been called, was an extremely interesting experimental phase in French poetry, and its effects are likely to be far-reaching, because of the scope and pliability of its method, and because it recognized that mood, mystery, and music are the essential elements of lyrical poetry.

The symbolist movement produced some half-dozen really fine lyric poets, and many more who each wrote a few good things, examples of which will be found in all modern French anthologies. Here, for reasons of space, we must limit ourselves to the three greatest, Mallarmé, Albert

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his essays on *The Poetic Principle* and *The Rationale of Verse*.



Samain, and last, but by no means least, Henri de R gnier.<sup>1</sup>

ST PHANE  
MALLARM   
(1842-1898)

St phane Mallarm  (1842-1898), by many years the senior of the other two, was not only the admitted leader of the symbolist movement, but the most intellectual and the most original of all its members. At his famous Tuesday receptions from nine to midnight he would hold forth on questions of general  sthetics, and more especially on the  sthetics of poetry. Later he wrote down some of these ideas elaborated in talk, and included them in the volume entitled *Divagations*, in which we find such suggestive fragments as the following :

“L'intention de la trag die fran aise ne fut pas de ramener l'antiquit , mais de produire en un milieu nul ou   peu pr s les grandes poses humaines et comme notre plastique morale.”

Mallarm  had an extraordinarily elliptical mind, and this, together with his desire to free poetry from matter and to suggest, by means of sounds and images, our subconscious thoughts and feelings, accounts for the obscurity of his prose and verse. He does not use words for their grammatical and logical value, but entirely for their allusive quality and for their dignity and beauty, arranging them according to a scheme at once decorative and melodic. The adverb “like” does not enter into his vocabulary. Of the two terms of a comparison he only retains the second. Even his imaginative masterpiece, *L'Apr s-midi d'un Faune*, conveys very little on a first reading, though to a musical ear it renders up all its treasures if read to the accompaniment of Debussy's Prelude of the same name. Perhaps no one has better summed up the peculiarity of Mallarm 's poetry than R my de Gourmont when he wrote :

“ Il semble que toutes les choses de la vie ayant  t  dites mille et mille fois, il ne resta plus au po te qu'  les montrer du doigt en

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Jammes and Paul Fort are excluded here, because they belong to a younger generation with somewhat different ideals; and Verhaeren, because, though he belonged to the symbolist generation, he has characteristics which transcend the movement.



murmurant quelques mots pour accompagner son geste et c'est ce qu'a fait Mallarmé."

While Mallarmé carried the symbolist ideal to its furthest logical conclusions, which takes poetry beyond the verge of the intelligible, Albert Samain (1858-1900) was perhaps the most timid of all the symbolists, for he constantly oscillated between the impassive objective method of the Parnassians and the musical, suggestive method of Verlaine. Poe, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé were Samain's delight, and their influence on his poetry is unmistakable. His first collection, *Au Jardin de l'Infante* (1893), bore as a motto some lines from Poe's poem *To Helen*, and in the opening piece he symbolizes his own soul under the guise of a Spanish Infanta :

"Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade

Elle est là, réflétée aux miroirs d'autrefois  
Ainsi qu'une galère oubliée dans la rade."

Like Baudelaire, Samain is fond of laying stress on the subtle affinities between concrete and spiritual things. Other good examples in his first volume are the poems beginning—

"Mon âme est un velours douloureux que tout froisse,"

and

"Mon cœur est un beau lac solitaire qui tremble."

The twenty-five poems of *Aux Flancs du Vase* (1898) are as impersonal and objective as those of *Au Jardin de l'Infante* had been elegiac and intimate. These graceful idylls of Greece might have been signed by Hérédia, if they did not leave so much to the imagination of the reader, for though they say a great deal, they suggest still more. Samain's last collection of poems, *Le Chariot d'Or*, published posthumously in 1901, has a simplicity, a vigour, and a sincerity which we sometimes miss in the earlier two (cf. the four sonnets on Versailles and *Ténèbres*). There is an exquisite quality in Samain's poetry, due mainly to its veiled suggestions and haunting elusive music. The verses

in which he tries to describe his own poetic creed (*Dilection, Je rêve de vers doux*) are in complete agreement with Verlaine's *Art Poétique*, and hence with the symbolist doctrine in its essentials. The following lines from a sonnet in *Le Chariot d'Or*, in which he suggests the aim of poetry, are a good example of his manner and of his use of the symbol :

"Lentement, doucement, de peur qu'elle se brise,  
Prendre une âme, écouter ses plus secrets aveux,  
En silence, comme on caresse des cheveux ;  
Atteindre à la douceur fluide de la brise . . .  
Essayer des accords de mots mystérieux . . .  
Et dans l'âme qui gonfle un immense soupir  
Laisser, en s'en allant, comme le souvenir  
D'un grand cygne de neige aux longues, longues plumes."

Neither Mallarmé nor Samain ever attempted *vers libre*. The masters of this form are Francis Vielé-Griffin (b. 1864), Charles van Lerberghe (1861-1907), Emile Verhaeren, of whom more anon, and, above all, Henri de Régnier.

Henri de Régnier (b. 1864), one of the best poets of the symbolist group, has, up to the date of writing, produced no less than nine volumes of poetry, eighteen volumes of novels and short stories, one play, and three volumes of essays. Jean de Gourmont, in a study of M. de Régnier's works, remarks very truly that while most of the other symbolist poets shut themselves up within their particular symbols and tried to describe their prison from within, de Régnier's symbolical prison has large windows, through which he looks out upon nature and life. His most characteristic, and perhaps his most beautiful, volume of verse is *Les Jeux Rustiques et Divins* (1897), which contains a wonderful poem entitled *Le Vase*, a symphony on the theme of the artistic creator at work ; the *Inscriptions pour les Treize Portes de la Ville*, which are among the finest poems that Régnier has ever written ; and a series of *Odes* and *Odelettes*, revealing an unsurpassed mastery of free verse, equalled only by Vielé-Griffin's *Thrène*, in memory of Mallarmé, and certain parts of Lerberghe's *Chanson d'Eve*.

HENRI DE  
RÉGNIER  
(b. 1864)

One has only to read the *Odelettes* beginning "Une petit roseau m'a suffi," "Si j'ai parlé de mon amour," and the poem entitled *Exergue* of an earlier volume, to understand that free verse in the hands of a master like de Régnier may be neither verse nor prose, but that it is certainly poetry. All de Régnier's collections are full of good things. In *Les Médailles d'Argile* (1900) and *La Cité des Eaux* (1902) he returns to more traditional metres. "La Cité des Eaux" is Versailles, with its park of a thousand fountains, a subject which had already tempted Verlaine, Stuart Merrill, and Samain. *La Sandale Ailée* (1906) and *Le Miroir des Heures* (1910) are less interesting though they too contain beautiful passages.

Symbolism was not confined to poetry, though, by the very nature of its æsthetic, it was natural that it should have been most fruitful in the lyric.

Henri de Régnier, the only symbolist poet who has written novels and short stories which can bear comparison with his poetry, in his early tales, *Contes à Moi-même* (1893) and *La Canne de Jaspe*, creates characters which are symbols of ideas, and even his later novels, *La Double Maîtresse* (1900), etc., have what he himself calls "un sens inattendu au delà de ce qu'ils semblent signifier." The same remark may be applied to the early novels of Maurice Barrès (b. 1862), written before he became the apostle of his race and his province, *Sous l'œil des Barbares* (1888), *Un Homme Libre* (1889), *Le Jardin de Bérénice* (1891), to which their author gave the collective title *Le Culte du Moi*, novels in which external incidents count for nothing and the inner life for everything; novels which, in spite of their ironical tone, conform to the æsthetic ideas of the symbolist school.

Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), after writing a series of novels in which he outdid Zola in minute and uncompromising naturalism, followed by a kind of caricature of literary and artistic symbolism, *A Rebours* (1884), the hero of which, Des Esseintes, is "the

**SYMBOLISM  
IN THE  
NOVEL**

Henri de  
Régnier

The early  
novels of  
Maurice Barrès

Joris-Karl  
Huysmans  
(1848-1907)

offspring of the decadent art that he adores," gave in *En Route* (1895) a curious revelation of the subconscious self. In the most famous of his novels, *La Cathédrale* (1898), an interpretation of the profound symbolism of the cathedral of Chartres, Huysmans shows how inert matter, how stone, wood, and glass may acquire through symbol a spiritual significance. In the same way the Belgian symbolist poet,

Georges  
Rodenbach  
(1855-1898)

Georges Rodenbach (1855-1898), in *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892), which is less a novel than a prose poem full of striking and unexpected images, gives a spiritual interpretation of the silent old Flemish city with its deserted streets, its gliding canals, its *béguinage*, where "les cantiques se déplaient tout blancs comme des linges," its churches and its belfry. "En réalité," remarks the author in his preface, "cette Bruges qu'il nous a plu d'élire apparaît presque humaine. . . . Un ascendant s'établit d'elle sur eux qui y séjournent."

**SYMBOLISM  
IN THE  
DRAMA**

Villiers de  
l'Isle Adam  
(1840-1889)

Symbolism was more productive in the drama than in the novel. One of the most important precursors of the movement, Villiers de l'Isle Adam (1840-1889), who, by the addition of one syllable, might have reversed Gautier's famous remark into "Je suis un homme pour qui le monde invisible existe," found it easier to express his metaphysical ideas in dramatic form than in

any other.<sup>1</sup> Living in an age of materialism, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, even in his very earliest plays, *Elën* (1863) and *Morgane* (1864), reveals his belief in the world of the spirit. *La Révolte* (1870) is a one-act play which anticipates Ibsen's *Doll's House*; and *Le Nouveau Monde* (1880), a fine drama in five acts, has for background the American War of Independence. All these plays have a spiritual and

*Axël*  
(1890)

symbolical meaning above and beyond their real plot, but it was in *Axël*, a prose poem in dramatic form, which was never intended for the stage,

<sup>1</sup> He also wrote several novels, notably *L'Eve Future* (1888), a satire on the pretensions of science, and several collections of Poësque



that Villiers produced the typical example of the symbolist drama. Published posthumously in 1890, this play, to which he had devoted many years of his life, moves entirely in the world of ideas. Though the action takes place in the early nineteenth century, the scene is laid partly in a monastery on the borders of French Flanders, partly in a medieval castle in the depths of the Black Forest—remote corners of the world into which the modern spirit has not yet penetrated—and in which the hero and heroine are faced turn by turn with the religious, the occult, the worldly, and the passionate ideal, only to regret them all. As a prose poem *Axël* is a very fine piece of work and pregnant with meaning, but it is too metaphysical and too discursive for successful representation on the stage.

“Discursive” is the last adjective that can be applied to the symbolical plays of Maurice Maeterlinck (b. 1862). “The secret of things which is just beyond the most subtle words,” says Arthur Symons, “the secret of the expressive silences, has always been clearer to Maeterlinck than to most people; and in his plays he has elaborated an art of sensitive, taciturn, and at the same time highly ornamental simplicity, which has come nearer than any other art to being the voice of silence.” Maeterlinck’s career as an author began in 1889, when he published a volume in the symbolist manner, *Serres Chaudes*, and a symbolical play, *La Princesse Maleine*, which was at once greeted as a masterpiece. *L’Intruse*, *Les Aveugles*, and *Les Sept Princesses*, which followed each other rapidly within the next two years, are one-act pieces of a concentrated tragic simplicity, and filled with a sense of the mystery of the universe and of the weakness of humanity. The idea that man is the destined victim of unknown and inexorable forces comes out very strongly in Maeterlinck’s dramatic trio entitled

short stories—*Contes Cruels* (1883), *Histoires insolites* (1888), which are masterpieces of their kind.



"Plays for Marionettes" (1894)—*Alladine et Palomides*, *L'Intérieur*, and *La Mort de Tintagiles*. Of Maeterlinck's two plays based on the traditional triangular situation between two women and a man, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893), and between two men and a woman, *Aglavaine et Sélysette* (1896), the former, of which there is an operatic version by Strauss, is the greater masterpiece, because, though both are occupied with the spiritual adventures of souls and both overshadowed by the inevitable doom which threatens the lovers, *Aglavaine et Sélysette* "seems to be written for a phantom stage and to be acted by disembodied spirits." The interest in the unconscious and the subconscious which inspired these dramas is the theme of Maeterlinck's first volume of essays, *Le Trésor des Humbles* (1896), while the second, *La Sagesse et la Destinée* (1898), shows its author's transition from pessimism to optimism, an optimism which somewhat tiresomely pervades his numerous later collections of essays, and which finds its epitome in his fairy-play, *L'Oiseau bleu* (1908).

In the heyday of the symbolist movement, while Maeterlinck was writing his early plays, a somewhat younger man, who only much later won recognition as a writer, was in Paris studying for the consular service, and in his leisure moments composing symbolical plays of a deeply philosophical kind. This was Paul Claudel (b. 1868), who has since held consulships in the United States, in China, at Prague, Frankfort, Hamburg, and Rio de Janeiro, and who is at present French Ambassador at Tokio.

It is impossible in a few lines to give any adequate idea of Claudel's over-subtle and disconcerting genius. He himself has formulated his mystical conception of poetic creation in three metaphysical treatises, collected under the title *Art Poétique* (1904), the leading idea of which is that the poet alone can enter into perfect communion with the whole of creation, he alone can elicit the inward order of the universe—or, as Claudel expresses it in one of his odes, "Toute la nature sans moi est vaine ; c'est moi

qui lui confère son sens" <sup>1</sup>; and again, "Par moi, aucune chose ne reste plus seule, mais je l'associe à une autre dans mon cœur." <sup>2</sup>

This belief in association as a creative element in thought accounts for Claudel's literary method, which consists almost entirely in accumulating images. He never analyses or develops his ideas, but passes from one metaphor to another without transition, and his style is thus like that of Rimbaud and Mallarmé, synthetic and elliptical in the highest degree, and hence often very obscure. All Claudel's plays are written in a sort of rhythmical prose cut up into lines or short paragraphs, and their theme is the insufficiency of worldly success and "the beauty and duty of self-mastery."

While Maeterlinck's orphan princesses, blind men and women, forlorn children, and aged guardians of lonely castles are unsubstantial dream-figures whom one always imagines as being of diminutive stature, the characters of Claudel's eight dramas, though endowed with a strong symbolical meaning, are over life-size, and never for a moment lose touch with the earth. As Duhamel remarks, in Claudel's plays "à aucun moment on ne cesse d'être en pleine humanité." All his heroes are men of action—a general in *Tête d'Or* (1891), an American merchant in *L'Echange* (1894), an engineer in *La Jeune Fille Violaine* (1892) and *La Ville*, a consul in *Partage du Midi* (1905), a cathedral builder in *L'Annonce faite à Marie* (1911) (the second version of *La Jeune Fille Violaine*), an Emperor of China in *Le Repas du Septième Jour* (1896).<sup>3</sup>

Claudel's drama is, in fact, a glorification of activity and

<sup>1</sup> *Cinq Grandes Odes*, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> The dates given here are the dates of composition, not of publication. Claudel's early plays were collected under the title *Théâtre* (1911-1912, four vols.). Apart from his plays and poems, Claudel also wrote a series of prose sketches and impressions of China, *La Connaissance de l'Est* (1907), which by many is regarded as his masterpiece.

effort, as it is also a glorification of the Catholic religion, and this double tendency in his work connects Claudel with the younger generation of French poets on the eve of the war.

## CHAPTER IX

### OUTSIDE THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

#### THE NOVEL AND THE DRAMA

**W**HILE symbolism is a term which roughly covers the whole lyrical production of France during the last fifteen years or so of the nineteenth century and beyond, the best and most characteristic novels and dramas of the period, though they all reveal a revulsion from excessive realism or naturalism and the impersonal method, remained on the whole uninfluenced by the æsthetic doctrines of the symbolist school.

Wearied of an art dealing entirely with externals, the three great novelists of the end of the century, **THE NOVEL** Paul Bourget, Anatole France, and Pierre Loti, made the novel a vehicle, the first for psychological analysis, the second for his philosophical ideas, and the third for his personal impressions.

Paul Bourget (b. 1852) was the first to deflect the naturalistic current into a psychological channel, and **PAUL BOURGET** (b. 1852) thus to return to the novel of analysis, of which, after *René*, *Adolphe*, and *Le Rouge et le Noir*, there had been but two adequate examples, Sainte-Beuve's *Volupté* (1834) and Fromentin's *Dominique* (1862). Brought up in a scientific atmosphere—his father was a professor of mathematics—and educated for the medical profession, Bourget brought a scientifically trained mind to bear upon psychological problems. After studying them in the literature read by his own generation—witness his *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* (1885–1886)—he proceeded to study them in real life, and even his earliest novels, *Cruelle*

*Enigme* (1885), *Un Crime d'Amour* (1886), *André Cornélis* (1887), etc., reveal a skilful anatomist of the moral nature of man, and also a confirmed pessimist. In 1889 appeared the most powerful novel that Bourget has ever written, *Le Disciple*, a severe indictment of thinkers and writers who philosophize without regard for the practical consequences of their teaching, accompanied by a preface asserting that the spiritual element in man's nature is every whit as important as those elements which can be explained physiologically. In his preface to *Terre Promise* (1892) Bourget takes up the same question again, insisting that "l'enquête sur la vie intérieure et morale doit fonctionner parallèlement à l'enquête sur la vie extérieure et sociale, l'une éclairant, approfondissant, corrigeant l'autre."

In 1899, in a preface to a collected edition of his works, he declares that his prolonged studies on the moral maladies of contemporary France have led him to the conclusion that the only remedy for this ill is a return to the traditional religion. By the time he wrote his next important novel, Bourget had returned to it himself, and at the same time to a belief in political and social tradition. *L'Étape* (1902) is a *roman à these* representing the disasters of a certain family as the inevitable consequences of its departure from its native province, the social condition of its ancestors, and the God of its fathers. The problem of national tradition and of man's moral obligation to his ancestors is the subject of most of Bourget's subsequent novels—*Un Divorce* (1904), *L'Émigré* (1907), etc.

Bourget is extremely acute in his analysis of states of mind, but from the artistic point of view his novels are somewhat marred by the delight he takes in pulling to pieces and putting together again the mechanism of the human mind, and by his method of continuous soliloquy. His characters are unnaturally introspective both about their feelings and about their actions. These defects are absent from Bourget's short stories, of which there are several collections—*Les Recommencements* (1897), *Le Justicier*, etc.

*His short  
stories*



Very different in every respect from Paul Bourget is Anatole France (Jacques Anatole Thibaut, b. 1844), the greatest living master of French prose and the winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1921.

ANATOLE  
FRANCE  
(b. 1844)

Anatole France is an artist and a thinker who has doubts about most things, and is even a little sceptical about his own negative conclusions. But of one thing he is quite convinced—that the only object of literature is the artistic expression of ideas, and that with morality, which varies with the ages, it has absolutely no concern. His first published work was a study of Alfred de Vigny (1868), which already showed signs of the discriminating critical faculty which distinguishes his later volumes of essays—*La Vie Littéraire* (1888–1892, four vols.) and *Le Génie Latin* (1913)—and which makes him one of the best literary critics of the age. Of his novels and short stories, which already fill some thirty volumes, all are delightful reading, both for the felicity and grace of their style and for their revelation of the workings of an interesting mind. For Anatole France's novels are impregnated with his individuality and his philosophy from his first masterpiece, *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* (1881), to his latest volume, *La Vie en Fleur* (1922).

Sometimes he speaks in his own person, and is frankly autobiographical, as in *Le Livre de mon Ami* (1885), *Pierre Nozière* (1899), and *Le Petit Pierre* (1918); at others he allows one of his characters to voice his ideas for him—the cynical Abbé Coignard, for instance, in *La Rôtisserie de la reine Pédauque* (1893), in *Les Opinions de Jérôme Coignard* and the M. Bergeret of *L'Orme du Mail* (1896), *Le Mannequin d'Osier* (1897), *L'Anneau d'Améthyste* (1899), and *M. Bergeret à Paris* (1901). These four novels, published under the collective title *Histoire Contemporaine*, were written while the feeling aroused by the Dreyfus case was at its height, and were largely inspired by their author's contempt for the anti-Dreyfusards, while his Swift-like satire, *L'Ile des Pingvins*, about a quarter of which is devoted to the famous Affaire, pours sarcasm on friends and adversaries

alike. Anatole France thus uses the novel chiefly as a medium for expressing his opinions on men and things, and this is the case even in those stories which have a more definite plot, such as *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* (1881), *Thaïs* (1890), *Le Lys Rouge* (1894), and *Les Dieux ont Soif* (1912).

In his attitude towards life Anatole France combines the tolerance of Montaigne, the determinism of Taine, and the cynicism of the later Renan. From the depths of his great learning, and with irony and dialectical skill as his weapons, he ridicules all attempts, theological, metaphysical, or scientific, to arrive at absolute truth. Yet his materialism is redeemed partly by the lightness of his touch and his frequent flashes of sympathy; partly by the magic of his style, which combines in equal proportions three qualities, found singly, but rarely together, in all great prose-writers—a musical rhythm, pictorial beauty, and a feeling for the genius of French syntax which can only be described as exquisite.

Unlike Bourget and Anatole France, Pierre Loti (Julien Viaud, b. 1850) is not primarily either a psychologist or a thinker, but a painter and a poet, who possesses the gift of transcribing his impressions very vividly and at the same time of suffusing them with the melancholy of his own temperament, and with a poetic glamour, which removes him far from the realists.

PIERRE LOTI  
(1850-1923)

As a naval officer, Loti travelled all over the globe, and in his novels, which are for the most part records of his wandering existence, the settings are very varied—the South Sea Islands in *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880), Senegambia in *Le Roman d'un Spahi* (1881), Brittany and the high seas in *Mon Frère Yves* (1881) and *Pêcheur d'Islande* (1886), Japan in *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), the Basque provinces in *Ramuntcho* (1897)—one of the finest of his novels—Turkey in *Les Désenchantés* (1906), etc. Loti is not the first French novelist to give an exotic setting to his stories—Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Chateaubriand had already done this—but he is the first to sketch the manners of

peoples who are still primitive to the extent of acting almost entirely upon instinct.

It is, however, as a poet of the sea and of seafaring life that Loti made his greatest contribution to literature. The passion for "life on the ocean wave" was in his blood: all his ancestors had been sailors, and his grandfather fought at the battle of Trafalgar. In the two novels in which he tells us the story of his childhood, *Le Roman d'un Enfant* (1890) and *Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort* (1891), we are told how from his earliest years he was attracted by the awe and mystery of "la grande tueuse," of whom he was to write the prose epic in *Mon Frère Yves*, and above all in *Pêcheur d'Islande*. This last, with its unsurpassed pictures of the sea in all her moods, "of wind-swept, wave-washed Brittany" and her melancholy fisherfolk, and its rendering of certain very simple but deep emotions, is undoubtedly Loti's masterpiece, and, if he had never written anything else, would assure him a high rank both among novelists and among writers of descriptive prose.

In the drama of the last fifteen years of the century, as in the novel, one is embarrassed by the amount **THE DRAMA** produced, amongst which it is as yet too early to attempt any selection. After the naturalism of the *Théâtre Libre*, the problem play comes once more to the fore, and is developed in a moral or psychological direction by Paul Hervieu, Maurice Donnay, Henri Bataille, etc., and in a philosophical or sociological direction by François de Curel, Eugène Brieux, Emile Fabre, etc., all of whom regard the drama as a school of morals, even as Dumas and Augier had done.

The reaction in favour of idealism, which we have studied in poetry and in the novel, is, apart from the symbolist drama, represented on the stage by the poetical dramas of Henri de Bornier (*La Fille de Roland*, 1875), François Coppée (*Severo Torelli*, 1883, and *Pour la Couronne*), and above all by Edmond Rostand (1864-1918). The latter's *Romanesques* (1894) and *La Princesse Lointaine* (1895) had already been hailed with joy by a public weary

of seeing nothing but the prose of real life on the stage ; but the first performance of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), with Coquelin in the title-rôle, was a triumph, and awakened an enthusiasm among playgoers which had been unknown since the appearance of *Hernani*. Rostand's next play, *L'Aiglon*, was produced in 1900 by Sarah Bernhardt, at her own theatre, she herself acting the part of the Duke of Reichstadt. *Chantecler* (1910), a fantasy of bird and animal life, was much less favourably received. Rostand has had the great merit of never repeating himself—the only resemblance between his plays lies in their heroic idealism, their lyrical qualities, their glowing enthusiasm, and a certain preciousness of style.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW IDEALISM AND THE NEW REALISM

#### "ART FOR LIFE'S SAKE"

1900-1914

IF the symbolist movement is still too recent to be viewed in its true perspective, the same remark applies with even greater reason to the period which was brought to a sudden close by the outbreak of the Great War. The most one can do is to indicate some of the tendencies of the new spirit in French literature during the first fourteen years of the twentieth century, for a new spirit there undoubtedly was, which, if formulas are helpful, might be summed up in the phrase "Art for life's sake."<sup>1</sup>

The renaissance of idealism, which Brunetière, the coiner of the phrase, saw dawning about 1890, **I. THE NEW IDEALISM** and which was partly the result of what others have called "the bankruptcy of science," consisted mainly in a growing belief in the liveableness of life, a rediscovery of the value and beauty of life in all its forms. This faith and optimism, strengthened, if not actually suggested, by the two very different philosophies of Nietzsche

<sup>1</sup> Much valuable information concerning the trend of contemporary literature is to be found in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue française* (founded 1906), which, during the years before the war, represented the opinions of the younger generation of writers, just as the *Mercure de France* represented those of their elders. For an understanding of the intellectual background, the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* (1897-1914) and *L'Effort Libre* (1910-1914) should be consulted.



and Bergson, was the leading characteristic of the younger generation of French writers before the war, and is to be found also in some of their elders. Romantics, realists, naturalists, and symbolists (with the single exception of Vielé-Griffin), whatever their other differences, had all been firmly convinced that life on its own merits was dust and ashes, and that the man who thought otherwise was a philistine. Hence the pessimism, scepticism, and contempt for the active life which pervades *fin de siècle* literature.

(1) Optimism The new writers who were making their names at the turn of the century and beyond were, on the contrary, in love with life, whether it brought joy or suffering. One of the best known of the younger poets, Fernand Gregh<sup>1</sup> (b. 1873), wrote in the *Figaro* of 1902 :

“Après l'école de la beauté pour la beauté, après l'école de la beauté par le rêve, il est temps de constituer l'école de la beauté *par la vie*.”

And some lines from another poet, Charles Vildrac<sup>2</sup>—

“Une vie dans le vent, toutes voiles dehors,  
Chair, esprit et le cœur—extase ou larmes—  
O oui, furieusement toutes voiles dehors,  
Une vie sans rien de commun avec la mort”—

might well serve as a motto for the majority of the younger poets, whatever their other differences. This same ardour for life rings through the work of the woman poets of the period. Their name is legion, but two at least rise far above the average minor poet, Madame de Noailles,<sup>3</sup> and Valentine de Saint-Point,<sup>4</sup> the great-niece of Lamartine.

<sup>1</sup> *La Beauté de Vivre* (1900), *Les Clartés Humaines* (1904), *L'Or des Minutes* (1905), etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Poèmes* (1905), *Images et Mirages* (1908), *Le Livre d'Amour* (1910).

<sup>3</sup> *Le Cœur Innombrable* (1901), *L'Ombre des Jours* (1902), *Eblouissements* (1907), etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Poèmes de la Mer et du Soleil* (1905), *Poèmes d'Orgueil* (1908), *L'Orbe Pâle* (1911).

The new writers of the first fourteen years of the century were not only filled with the joy of life, but they were for the most part apostles of a life of action and energy, and many of them led one, often not from necessity, but by choice. Claudel is in the Consular Service, Maurice Barrès sits in the French Chamber as Deputy for Paris, while Charles Péguy printed every word of the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* with his own hand and then sold them over the counter, and Psichari wrote his three novels while on active service in Mauretania and Morocco.

And here it may be mentioned that, owing to French colonial expansion during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, when Tunis, the Tonkin, Madagascar, the French Congo, the Soudan, and Morocco in turn came definitely under French rule, a whole literature of colonial life and adventure has sprung up (cf. Emile Nolly: *La Barque Annamite*, 1910; Paul Adam: *La Ville Inconnue*, 1911; Jérôme et Jean Tharaud: *La Fête Arabe*, 1912; *L'Ombre de la Croix*, 1917; Pierre Mille: *Louise et Barnavaux*, 1912; Henry Daguèrches: *Le Kilomètre 83*, 1913; Louis Hémon: *Marie Chapdelaine*, 1921, etc.).

The French have always taken their rôle as "civilisateurs" very seriously. This preoccupation comes out very clearly in most of their colonial novels, strengthened without doubt by that faith in the future of their race which permeates the work of pre-war French writers, and which is in complete contrast to the misgivings expressed or implied during the eighties and early nineties of last century.

Never before, perhaps, had Frenchmen felt such a strong pride in their national past, or so secure a confidence in the perennial qualities of their race, as in the early years of the twentieth century. This pride and this confidence find expression in books bearing such illuminating titles as *Les Diverses Familles Spirituelles de la France* (Maurice Barrès), *Quand les Français ne s'aimaient pas* (Charles Maurras), *La Renaissance de l'Orgueil Français* (Ernest Rey), *La Victoire de la France*

(2) Admiration  
for a life of  
action and  
energy

The colonial  
novel and the  
novel of  
adventure

(3) Nationalism

*sur les Français* (Pierre Hamp), etc. But quite apart from works of propaganda and criticism, works of pure literature reveal the same patriotic spirit and a general tendency to return to the characteristically French qualities of clarity and order.

This renaissance of the national tradition was to some degree a reaction on the part of a generation who had not experienced the defeat of 1870, and were determined to rise superior to it.<sup>1</sup> It was only after the insults offered to France by the German Emperor at Tangiers in 1905, and again at Agadir in 1911, that the expression of this patriotism, which was in origin racial rather than territorial, became, in the writings of Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras, so resolute as to be decidedly narrow. These authors, two of the finest contemporary prose-writers of France, were before the war, and still are, the greatest apostles of nationalism and tradition. Charles Maurras (b.

1868), founder and director of *L'Action Française* (1905), has very much weakened his cause by seeing a necessary connection between patriotism and monarchy, but despite his royalism, he

is an interesting thinker and a name to conjure with in certain circles in France, while his literary gifts are beyond dispute.<sup>2</sup>

Maurice Barrès (b. 1862), after his early introspective novels, which have been mentioned elsewhere, published, between 1897 and 1902, the trilogy entitled *Le Roman de l'Energie nationale—Les Déracinés, L'Appel au Soldat, Leurs Figures*—which already reveal the fervent traditionalist and believer in local patriotism who was to write *Les Amitiés Françaises* (1903), *Au Service de l'Allemagne* (1905), *Colette Baudoche* (1909), and *La Colline Inspirée* (1913).

Barrès, who is a Lorrainer, has a devotion to his native province which reminds one of Du Bellay's love of his "petit Lyré," and his longing for "la

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Psichari: *L'Appel des Armes*, Pt. II, chap. v.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Albert Thibaudet: *Les Idées de Charles Maurras* (1920).

douceur angévine." He believes, moreover, that the individual can only develop fully and happily if "profondement raciné dans la terre et dans les morts." *Les Déracinés* (1897), like Bourget's *Etape* (1903) and Estaunié's *Ferment* (1899), shows the evils of violently uprooting anyone from the traditions and surroundings which have been those of his ancestors for generations. The novels of Maurice Barrès are nearly all set against the background of his native Lorraine, and though he did not invent literary regionalism, he supplied, as it were, an æsthetic and moral justification at a moment when a certain decentralization, administrative and intellectual, was taking place, when it was no longer true to say that Paris was France. At the present day there is scarcely a French province which has not had its literary interpreter, of great or small merit.<sup>1</sup>

This love of the homeland, in the narrower as well as in the wider sense, and this desire to keep alive ancestral memories and ancestral traditions, to be, as it were, in communion with the historic past of their country, explain to some extent the new attitude towards the Church and the Army expressed by so many men of letters at the turn of the century. The Army and the Church, which, in spite of abuses, are the repositories of many fine old ideals, had been justly attacked for their attitude during the Dreyfus case, and there were some who, instead of reforming them, would fain have swept them away

<sup>1</sup> Cf. an interesting article by Edmond Eggli, entitled *Le Régionalisme dans la Littérature Française* (*The French Quarterly*, March, 1922). Already in 1837, Michelet, in the opening chapters to the third volume of his *Histoire de France*, had given a wonderful picture of the geographical and ethnical characteristics of the ancient provinces of France. From about 1840 onwards there are numerous examples of regionalism in French literature—George Sand (Berry); Mérimée (Corsica); Ferdinand Fabre (Languedoc); Erckmann-Chatrian (Alsace); Pierre Loti and Anatole Le Braz (Brittany); René Bazin, *La Terre qui Meurt* (1899), *Le Ble qui Lève* (1907), etc. (La Vendée); Henri Bordeaux, *Le Pays Natal* (1900), *Les Roquevillard* (1906), etc. (Savoy); Emile Moselly, *Terres Lorraines* (1907), etc.; Louis Bertrand, *Le Sang des Races* (1899), *L'Invasion* (1907) (shores of the Mediterranean).



for ever, and this brought about a reaction in their favour. This fusion of patriotism and religion is best seen in the novels of Ernest Psichari, and above all in the writings of Charles Péguy, the one killed in the retreat from Charleroi, the other in the battle of the Marne.

Ernest Psichari (1883-1914), the grandson of Renan, who gave up his studies at the Sorbonne and his thesis on the bankruptcy of idealism to become a private in an African regiment, because "l'armée seule aujourd'hui, et malgré tous les efforts que l'on a faits, possède une tradition,"<sup>1</sup> sees a kind of relation between the soldier and the priest (*L'Appel des Armes*, 1913; *Le Voyage du Centurion*, 1916).

Charles Péguy (1873-1914), one of Bergson's most remarkable and original pupils, to whom Psichari dedicated *L'Appel des Armes* as the man "en qui vit aujourd'hui l'âme de la France," had been an ardent Dreyfusard, because he believed in truth and justice more than in anything else in the world. The

*Les Cahiers de  
la Quinzaine*  
(1900-1915)

*Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, which he founded in 1900 to defend his ideas and his ideals, were not a review in the ordinary sense of the word, for each number was complete in itself, and usually came from the pen of one author. The whole series, which runs from January 5, 1900, to July 12, 1915, forms a most valuable collection of documents on political, moral, and æsthetic questions, besides containing the first editions of some of the most notable novels of the day—Anatole France's *Crainquebille*, for instance, the eleven volumes of Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, most of Jérôme and Jean Tharaud's early novels, Julien Benda's *Ordination*, the early essays of Suarès. In them, too, Péguy published all his own work, including a large number of polemical writings, of which *Notre Patrie* (1905), *Notre Jeunesse* (1910), and *Victor-Marie Conte Hugo* (1910), are the finest examples. Péguy's imaginative works may be divided into two groups—the three *Mystères*, *Le Mystère de la Charité de Jeanne d'Arc*

<sup>1</sup> *L'Appel des Armes*.



(1910), *Le Porche du Mystère de la Deuxième Vertu* (1911), *Les Saints Innocents* (1912), all written for the five-hundredth anniversary of Joan of Arc, and dealing with her spiritual preparation for her great mission at the hands of a Franciscan nun, Madame Gervaise, who teaches her the duty of hope, the beauty of heroism, and a loving pride in her native land. While these three books are written in a kind of rhythmical prose, sometimes broken up into lines, the three last Péguy wrote—*La Tapisserie de Sainte-Geneviève et de Jeanne d'Arc* (1912), *La Tapisserie de Notre Dame* (1913), and *Eve* (1914)—are in the regular twelve-syllable riming line, but all six, in spite of great beauty of thought, and often of style, are apt to be tiresome to read, because of their author's curious and almost childish trick of repetition and reiteration.

Péguy was a mystic and an idealist, but idealism and mysticism meant for him not remoteness from life, but active concrete work in the service of humanity. He began as a socialist, because socialism seemed to open the widest field for active labour; he ended as a devout Catholic, with an almost medieval attitude towards God, familiar and at the same time adoring, because action implies belief, and because, like Barrès, he was a patriot and saw how intimately the Catholic faith is interwoven with the history of France. The saints of whom he sings are patriot saints—Geneviève, who saved Paris from the Huns; Jeanne, who delivered France from her English invaders. As a child Péguy lived at Orleans, where his mother mended chairs in the cathedral and his grandmother told him stories about Joan of Arc, who became for him the incarnation of the virtues of France, of justice and truth, in the interests of which he preached incessantly “*que la France se refasse et se refasse de toutes ses forces.*”

The cult of Joan of Arc, “*fille de France et fille de Dieu,*” was not confined to Péguy, though it was he who made her peculiarly his own. In 1908 the necessary steps were taken for her canonization; her feast-day is now a national festival, and she is still to many a symbol of religious and

national feeling, though a discordant note was struck by Anatole France's learned and clever *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* (1908).

Of another Catholic poet, Paul Claudel, we have already spoken. Though he had steeped himself in the beauty of paganism and antiquity, he is no more vaguely religious than Péguy.

"Soyez béni mon Dieu," he cries, "que vous m'avez délivré des idoles et qui faites que je n'adore que vous seul et non point Isis ou Osiris, ou la Justice, ou le Progrès, ou la Vérité, ou la Divinité, ou les Lois de la Nature, ou l'Art, ou la Beauté."

In this connection a third name must be mentioned, that of Francis Jammes (b. 1868), who has been described as "a Faun who has turned Francis-can Friar."<sup>1</sup> It was Claudel who converted him, and after his conversion, which took place in 1905, he wrote the definitely religious poems contained in *L'Eglise habillée de Feuilles* (1906) and *Les Géorgiques Chrétiennes* (1912), "a sort of rural Christian year."<sup>1</sup> But from his solitude at Orthez (Basses-Pyrénées) Jammes had already before his conversion won fame by the three collections which so far contain his finest lyrics—*De l'Angélus de l'Aube à l'Angélus du Soir* (1898); *Le Deuil des Primevères* (1901), and *Le Triomphe de la Vie* (1902). He is essentially the poet of the country-side and of the beasts of the field, enjoying everything that a rural life can offer without ever seeking in nature a reflection of his own moods (cf. the charming poem in *Le Triomphe de la Vie*, beginning "Je ne veux pas d'autre joie"). Again, his love of animals is not the artistic and scientific delight in their form and movements which was characteristic of Leconte de Lisle, but rather that feeling of simple comradeship which has caused Jammes to be compared with St. Francis (cf. *Prière pour aller au Paradis avec les Anes*, and the poem beginning "Petit âne mendiant et gris"). The characteristics of Jammes' poetry are its extreme simplicity, the delight it

<sup>1</sup> Madame Duclaux: *Contemporary French Writers*, 1919.

expresses in work done well and joyously, and the sense of joy it reveals in the communion existing between himself and all created things.

This same joy rings through Saint-Georges de Bouhélier's *Chants de la Vie ardente* (1902), and the twenty or more volumes containing the *Ballades françaises* of Paul Fort (b. 1872). The latter, in spite of his nationalism,<sup>1</sup> his regionalism<sup>2</sup>—he is the poet of the *Ile de France*, of which hitherto the painters Monet, Sisley, and Pissarro had alone succeeded in conveying the peculiar charm—and his religious attitude,<sup>3</sup> has not been as popular in France as one might expect, chiefly, no doubt, because of his metrical peculiarities. Through his poetry rhymes he writes each verse as though it were a paragraph in prose, believing that by lessening the appeal to the eye he increases the appeal to the ear.

Paul Fort has a special gift for writing poems in the folk-song style (cf. *Ballades françaises*, vol. i, and vol. v, *L'Amour Marin*), and it is perhaps in these and in his nature poems that we see him at his best. Like Jammes, and indeed like most of the younger generation of poets, he plunges straight into nature and rejoices in her like a child.

“Mais toute la nature est au seuil de mon cœur. La terre et le soleil ont la même cadence, rythmée à l'unisson des battements de ma vie. La lumière du jour te pénètre, ô ma vie ! Elle s'ajoute à moi comme une récompense, quand je laisse errer mes sens de l'astre aux fleurs. La terre et le soleil en moi sont en cadence, et toute la nature est entrée dans mon cœur.”

Like most of the younger generation of poets, Paul Fort admires in nature all that is strong and life-giving—sunshine, wind, the soil where men labour—a very different attitude from that of the symbolists, who loved, above all things, silence, mist, and moonlight.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii, *Le Roman de Louis XI* (1899); vol. xix, *Poèmes de France* (1916); vol. xx, *Que j'ai de plaisir à être français* (1917).

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ix, *Ile de France* (1917), and poems scattered through his other collections.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. xiv, *Vivre en Dieu* (1912).

This new love for the strong things in nature is best seen in the works of that international poet, Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), who, like Péguy, by the date of his birth belongs to the generation of Mallarmé, Samain, and Rénier, yet may be said to synthesize the whole modern movement in art. He was a native of Belgium, the country which stands, as it were, at the crossroads of Europe, Flemish by birth like Maeterlinck, Rodenbach, and Van Lerberghe, but like them French by speech and education. It has often been remarked that the Flemish temperament is a curious mixture of violent and almost brutal animal spirits, of which the greatest Belgian novelist, Camille Lemonnier (1845-1913), is an admirable example, and a strange unreasoning mysticism, of which Rodenbach and Maeterlinck are typical representatives, while Verhaeren reveals in his work both sides of the Belgian temperament.

Verhaeren's nature-poems are best studied in the six series of *Toute la Flandre*, beginning with *Les Tendresses premières* (1904) and ending with *Les Blés Mouvants* (1913). His landscape is always the land of Flanders, with its broad, rolling, windswept plains, its wide horizons, its great stretches of windy sky piled high with white clouds. (Cf. poems entitled *Les Vignes de ma Muraille*, *Vents de Tempêtes*, *Les Beaux Images*, etc.)

This lover of the open air, of sunshine, wind, and rain, is more akin to Wordsworth than any other French poet; to the Wordsworth who wrote:

All things that love the sun are out of doors;  
The sun rejoices in the morning's birth;  
The grass is bright with rain-drops; on the moors  
The hare is running races in her mirth.

He has been compared with Constable, and indeed they love the same spacious windy skies, the same sun-flecked fields. Some of Verhaeren's finest nature-poems are inspired by the idea of the continuity of natural phenomena. *Le Franc*



*Buveur* (*Les Blés Mouvants*), for instance, is a processional in honour of the seasons, and *L'Est, l'Ouest, le Sud, le Nord* (*Les Flammes Hautes*) a splendid marching-song dedicated to the four points of the compass. Though Verhaeren gives us some wonderfully serene pictures of nature at peace, it is in her wild tempestuous moods that he loves her best.

“La bondissante mer m’a rempli de ferveur ;  
J’ai célébré la tempête, le vent, la neige,  
L’espace en marche et l’horizon et son cortège,  
De nuages volants et de rouges lueurs.  
L’âpre nature a guerroyé par tout mon être  
Lui imprimant la loi de sa férocité.”

This admiration for energy and effort in nature as elsewhere, which, as we have seen, was not peculiar to Verhaeren, accounts for a tendency in contemporary literature which has been called the New Realism, and which consists not in a seeking of the real for the sake of its crudities, nor yet in an attempt to bring out a contrast between it and the ideal, but in a desire

to show the beauty and poetry of modern cities with their crowds, their clanging and belching factories, their railway stations and docks, regarded as the visible expression of twentieth-century power and energy. Thus to the three great lyrical themes—Nature, Love, Death—and the lesser ones of Country and Glory—were now added a new theme—Modern Life. Here again Verhaeren stands supreme—the Parnassians and the symbolists, though they had been perfectly willing to accept all the comforts and luxuries with which machinery and improved means of communication have provided the modern world, were as convinced as Ruskin and Tolstoi that they were ugly and evil things in themselves and a danger to art. Even Sully Prudhomme, who endeavoured to show the poetry of scientific discoveries like electricity, rarely succeeded in avoiding the trivial and the commonplace ; indeed it takes a master-hand to reveal the beauty of the modern industrial city and so to transfigure it, and much poetry of machinery has been

## II. THE NEW REALISM

Poetry of  
modern  
industrial  
cities



written in recent years which is not poetry at all. Verhaeren possesses this gift of transfiguration, for he brings everything into connection with his central vision of man "swinging along in unison with the rhythm of the world"—the phrase is his own—and with his delight in all expressions of power and energy. [Cf. *Les Forces Tumultueuses* (1902), *La Multiple Splendeur* (1906), *Les Rythmes Souveraines* (1910), *Les Flammes Hautes* (1917)].

Influence of  
Walt Whitman man had been the first to make cities and crowds the subject of poetry, and though it is unproved how far he influenced the *vers libre* of the symbolists, it would be much easier to prove that in choice of subject-matter he was a source of inspiration to the younger generation of French poets. Some critics think, indeed, that his influence has been so strong that they would call the whole poetic movement from 1900 to the outbreak of the war "le Whitmanisme," and though this is no doubt an exaggeration, he has certainly left his mark in contemporary French poetry, notably in the case of Barzun, Jules Romains, and Georges Duhamel. There is, however, as has been pointed out, something lazily complacent in the blessing which Walt Whitman bestowed on modern industrialism, which is far removed from the attitude of Verhaeren. When he first made the acquaintance of London, he was filled with the horror and despair reflected in the trilogy, *Les Soirs* (1887), *Les Débâcles* (1888), *Les Flambeaux Noirs* (1890). It was only later that he came to recognize the inner meaning of crowded modern cities, the work they are doing for the future, and hence their beauty.

"Vous existez en moi, fleuves, forêts et monts,  
Et vous encor, mais vous surtout, villes puissantes,  
Ou je sens s'exalter les cris les plus profonds,  
D'âge en âge sur la terre retentissante."

Thus his *Campagnes Hallucinées* (1893) and his *Villes Tentaculaires* (1895) are not, as one might suppose, a dirge for the abandoned farms and fields, and a scathing denuncia-

tion of the towns, for Verhaeren believes and declares that the cities will create anew after having destroyed.

The beauty of machinery, "l'homme infiniment multiplié," is a constant theme with Verhaeren—machines in which

"Chaque effort vole au but comme un dard vers le cible  
Si bien que leur travail complexe et inflexible  
Fait brusquement songer au travail du destin."<sup>1</sup>

It seems a strange irony of fate that this singer of engines should have been killed by one. He was crushed by a train in the station at Rouen.

Both Walt Whitman and Verhaeren sang of man in the mass, of the crowd as apart from the individual.

Crowd psycho-  
logy as a  
theme for  
poetry

What they had done objectively, several young French poets at the beginning of the twentieth century tried to do subjectively—that is to say, they tried to be, not the singer watching the crowd, but the crowd itself singing. This was the attempt made by Henri-Martin Barzun in *Poème de l'Homme* and *Chant de l'Idée* (1904-1906) and Jules Romains in *La Vie Unanime* (1908), which is based on the idea that

"Les vérités de maintenant  
Naissent où il y a beaucoup d'hommes  
Et s'exhalent des multitudes."

This endeavour to interpret what Verhaeren calls "le cœur myriadaire et rouge de la foule" has so far not produced any masterpieces, and has merely popularized the results obtained by the sociologists Durckheim, Tarde, and Le Bon, who have made a special study of collective psychology. It is mentioned here merely as an interesting experiment which may prove fruitful, and as one more instance of the desire to poetize all that is most significant in modern life.

It would be a grave mistake, however, to suggest that French literature before the war was almost entirely inspired by the conditions of twentieth-century civilization. As we have seen, there are still poets—Verhaeren

<sup>1</sup> *Les Machines*, in *Les Flammes Hautes* (1917).

himself was one of them<sup>1</sup>—who sing of the destiny of man, and are hence inspired by the grand old themes of Nature, Love, and Death, while the greatest and most original French poet now living, Paul Valéry, the author of *La Jeune Parque* (1917) and *Charmes* (1922), expresses his difficult thought with classical perfection and restraint. The best contemporary novelists, apart from those already mentioned, André Gide,<sup>2</sup> Edouard Estaunié,<sup>3</sup> Jérôme et Jean Tharaud,<sup>4</sup> Emile Clermont,<sup>5</sup> etc., are all in their several ways psychologists of the individual and not of the crowd, and stylists in the best French manner.

An interesting development of the psychological novel is to be found in the numerous novels of childhood which appeared before the war. In *La Maternelle* (1904), *La Boîte aux Gosses* (1907), etc., Léon Frapié studies the psychology of elementary school-children, while other novelists make a careful analysis of a child's feelings when it is first brought into contact with the mysteries of life—love, sin, pain, death, etc. Among the best writers of such novels are René Boylesve (*La Becquée*, 1901; *L'Enfant à la Balustrade*, 1903), Romain Rolland (first two volumes of *Jean-Christophe*, 1904), Edmond Jaloux (*Le Reste est Silence*, 1909), Marguerite Audoux (*Marie-Claire*, 1919), and two young men killed early in the war, André Lafon, who in *L'Elève Gilles* (1911) tells the story of a little boy growing up, though all unconscious of it, under the shadow of his father's insanity, and Alain Fournier, whose *Grand Meaulnes* (1913), a tale full of imagination and fantasy, recounting the adventures of two schoolboys, is a masterpiece of its kind.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Les Heures Claires* (1895), *Les Heures d'Après-midi* (1905), *Les Heures du Soir* (1911), and many poems in his other collections.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Immoraliste* (1902), *La Porte Etroite* (1909), *Isabelle* (1911), *La Symphonie Pastorale* (1919).

<sup>3</sup> *La Vie Secrète* (1908), *Les Choses voient* (1914), etc.

<sup>4</sup> *La Maîtresse Servante* (1911).

<sup>5</sup> *Amour Promis* (1910), *Laure* (1913), *Histoire d'Isabelle*.

<sup>6</sup> Marcel Proust (†1922), whose first novel, *Du Côté de chez Swann*, published during the winter of 1913-1914, the first instalment of a

And so we find the old and the new side by side, and sometimes combined, proving, if proof were  
Conclusion needed, that, as Kipling once said, France is the country most faithful to old things and most wildly enthusiastic about new ones.

sequence entitled *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, is also a novel of childhood. Its author, however, did not make his name until after 1914, and therefore his interesting work lies outside the province of this chapter.





## APPENDIX A

### SYNOPTIC CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
<p>LITERATURE OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE</p> <p>1789. Foundation of <i>Journal des Débats</i>.</p>	<p>Alfieri: <i>Della Tirannide</i>.          Blake: <i>Songs of Innocence</i>.          Burke's <i>Reflections on the French Revolution</i>.          Burns's <i>Tam o' Shanter</i>.          Goethe's <i>Tasso</i>.          Boswell's <i>Life of Johnson</i>.</p>	<p>1789-1815. FRENCH DOMINATION IN ITALY          Outbreak of French Revolution.          Declaration of the Rights of Man.          The Jews receive civic rights in France.          Vancouver explores N.W. Coast of America.</p>
<p>1792. Roget de Lisle: <i>La Marseillaise</i>.</p>	<p>1792. Young's <i>Travels in France</i>.          1793. Burns's <i>Poems</i>.          Monti's <i>Bassutiana</i> attacks French Revolution.</p>	<p>Flight of Louis XVI from Paris.          Haydn composes his first six Grand Symphonies.          † Mozart.</p>
<p>1794. Xavier de Maistre: <i>Voyage autour de ma chambre</i>.          Condorcet: <i>Esquisse d'un tableau historique du progrès de l'esprit humain</i>.</p>	<p>Goethe: <i>Reinecke Fuchs</i>.          Anne Radcliffe: <i>Mysteries of Udolpho</i>.          Blake: <i>Songs of Experience</i>.</p>	<p>Execution of Louis XVI.          The Louvre becomes a national art museum.          † Reynolds.          † Fall of Robespierre.          Goethe becomes Director of Court Theatre at Weimar.</p>
<p>1796. Joseph de Maistre: <i>Considérations sur la France</i>.</p>	<p>Goethe: <b>Wilhelm Meister I</b>.          Lewis: <i>The Monk</i>.          Goethe and Schiller: <i>Xenien</i>.</p>	<p>Foundation at Paris of the Institut and of the Ecole Normale and Ecole Polytechnique.</p>
<p>1797. Chateaubriand: <i>Essai sur les Révolutions</i>.</p>	<p>Goethe: <i>Hermann und Dorothea</i>.          1798. <b>Wordsworth and Coleridge: Lyrical Ballads</b>.          The Schlegels edit the <i>Athenæum</i>.          Beginning of Romantic Movement in Germany.</p>	<p>Haydn's <i>Creation</i>.          Establishment of Helvetian Republic.</p>
<p>1799. La Harpe: <i>Cours de Littérature</i>.</p>	<p>Schiller: <b>Wallenstein</b>.</p>	<p>Foundation of the Banque de France.</p>

1800.	Madame de Staël : <i>De la Littérature.</i>	Maria Edgeworth : <i>Castle Rackrent.</i> Wordsworth's Preface to Second Edition of <i>Lyrical Ballads.</i>	The Voltaic battery is completed.
1801.	Chateaubriand : <i>Atala.</i>	Foundation of <i>Edinburgh Review.</i>	First Factory Act.
1802.	" Le Génie du Christianisme.	Foscolo : <i>Ultimo Lettere di Jacopo Ortis</i> (first authorized edition).	Creation of <i>lycées</i> in France.
	Madame de Staël : <i>Delphine.</i>	Tieck's collection of <i>Minnelieder</i> stimulates study of Old German literature.	Beethoven's <i>Fidelio.</i>
1804.	Senancour : <i>Oberman.</i>	Schiller : <i>Wilhelm Tell.</i> Schlegelmacher : <i>Reden über die Religion.</i>	Bonaparte becomes Emperor of the French.
1805.	Chateaubriand : <i>René.</i>	Scott's <i>Lay of the Last Minstrel.</i> Wordsworth begins his <i>Prelude</i> (not published till 1850).	Beethoven's <i>Waldsteinsonate</i> and <i>Eroica symphony.</i>
1807.	Madame de Staël : <i>Corinne.</i>	Byron's <i>Hours of Idleness.</i> Wordsworth's <i>Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.</i>	Battle of Trafalgar.
1808.	Fourier : <i>Théorie des quatre Mouvements.</i>	Foscolo : <i>I Sepolcri.</i> Scott : <i>Marmion.</i> Goethe : <i>Faust I.</i> Clemens Brentano : <i>Des Knaben Wunderhorn.</i>	Paganini begins his violin tours.
1809.	Chateaubriand : <i>Les Martyrs.</i>	Fichte : <i>Reden an die deutsche Nation.</i> Krilov's <i>Fables.</i>	Abolition of slave trade in British Dominions.
1810.	Madame de Staël : <i>De l'Allemagne.</i>	Schlegel's <i>Vorträge.</i>	Foundation of <i>Quarterly Review.</i>
1811.	Chateaubriand : <i>Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem.</i>	H. von Kleist : <i>Kathchen von Heilbrunn.</i>	Foundation of Berlin University.
1812.	Millevoye : <i>Élégies.</i>	Jane Austen : <i>Sense and Sensibility.</i> Goethe : <i>Dichtung und Wahrheit.</i> Fouqué : <i>Undine.</i>	Foundation of Christiania University.
1813.	Sismondi : <i>Littératures du Midi de l'Europe.</i>	Byron : <i>Childe Harold</i> , Cantos I and II. Brothers Grimm : <i>Kinder und Hausmärchen.</i> Jane Austen : <i>Pride and Prejudice.</i> Shelley : <i>Queen Mab.</i>	Elizabeth Fry begins to visit prisons.
1814.		Walter Scott : <i>Waverley.</i> Wordsworth : <i>The Excursion.</i> Ruckert : <i>Geharnischte Sonetten.</i> Chamisso : <i>Peter Schlemihl.</i>	Abdication of Napoleon. Congress of Vienna. <i>The Times</i> installs first steam press.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—continued

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
LITERATURE OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE—continued 1815. Béranger's first collection of songs. Cousin becomes Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne. 1816. Benjamin Constant: <i>Adolphe</i> .	1815. Scott: <i>Guy Mannering</i> . Uhland: <i>Gedächtnis</i> . 1816. Coleridge's <i>Christabel</i> . Byron's <i>Prisoner of Chillon</i> . Goethe's <i>Italienische Reise</i> . Berchet: <i>Lettera semiseria di Grisostomo</i> . 1817. Byron: <i>Manfred</i> . Grillparzer: <i>Die Ahnfrau</i> . 1818. Shelley's <i>Revolt of Islam</i> . Scott: <i>Rob Roy and Heart of Midlothian</i> . Keat's <i>Endymion</i> . Grillparzer: <i>Sappho</i> . Leopardi: <i>All' Italia</i> . " <i>Sopra il Monumento di Dante</i> . 1819. Keats: <i>Ode to a Nightingale</i> . " <i>Ode to a Grecian Urn</i> . Washington Irving's <i>Sketchbook</i> .	Battle of Waterloo. First European Chair of Sanscrit founded at the Collège de France. 1815-1870. STRUGGLE FOR ITALIAN UNITY.
1817. Lamennais: <i>Essai sur l'Indifférence</i> . 1818. Casimir Delavigne: <i>Les Messéniennes</i> . Marceline Desbordes-Valmore: <i>Élégies et Romances</i> . Charles Nodier: <i>Jean Shagan</i> .	1819. Keats: <i>Ode to a Nightingale</i> . " <i>Ode to a Grecian Urn</i> . Washington Irving's <i>Sketchbook</i> .	First Atlantic Steamship.
c. 1820-1850. ROMANTIC MOVEMENT 1820. Lamartine: <i>Premières Méditations</i> . Joseph de Maistre: <i>Du Pape</i> .	Keats: <i>Lamia, Isabella, etc.</i> Shelley: <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> . Mathurin: <i>Melmoth the Wanderer</i> . Grillparzer: <i>Das goldene Vlies</i> . Schopenhauer: <i>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</i> . 1821. Scott: <i>Kenilworth</i> . Goethe: <i>Wilhelm Meister II</i> . Manzoni: <i>Il Cinque Maggio</i> . De Quincey: <i>Confessions of an Opium-Eater</i> . Heine's first poems. Manzoni: <i>Adelchi</i> .	1830-61. PERIOD OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY Discovery of Venus of Milo.
1821. De Maistre: <i>Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg</i> . Saint-Simon: <i>Système Industriel</i> .	1821. Keats: <i>Lamia, Isabella, etc.</i> Shelley: <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> . Mathurin: <i>Melmoth the Wanderer</i> . Grillparzer: <i>Das goldene Vlies</i> . Schopenhauer: <i>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</i> . 1821. Scott: <i>Kenilworth</i> . Goethe: <i>Wilhelm Meister II</i> . Manzoni: <i>Il Cinque Maggio</i> . De Quincey: <i>Confessions of an Opium-Eater</i> . Heine's first poems. Manzoni: <i>Adelchi</i> .	1830-61. PERIOD OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY Discovery of Venus of Milo.
1822. Victor Hugo: <i>Odes et Ballades</i> . Alfred de Vigny: <i>Poèmes</i> . Charles Nodier: <i>Tribby</i> .	1822. Keats: <i>Lamia, Isabella, etc.</i> Shelley: <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> . Mathurin: <i>Melmoth the Wanderer</i> . Grillparzer: <i>Das goldene Vlies</i> . Schopenhauer: <i>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</i> . 1821. Scott: <i>Kenilworth</i> . Goethe: <i>Wilhelm Meister II</i> . Manzoni: <i>Il Cinque Maggio</i> . De Quincey: <i>Confessions of an Opium-Eater</i> . Heine's first poems. Manzoni: <i>Adelchi</i> .	1830-61. PERIOD OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY Discovery of Venus of Milo.
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1821. De Maistre: <i>Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg</i> . Saint-Simon: <i>Système Industriel</i> .	1821. Keats: <i>Lamia, Isabella, etc.</i> Shelley: <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> . Mathurin: <i>Melmoth the Wanderer</i> . Grillparzer: <i>Das goldene Vlies</i> . Schopenhauer: <i>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</i> . 1821. Scott: <i>Kenilworth</i> . Goethe: <i>Wilhelm Meister II</i> . Manzoni: <i>Il Cinque Maggio</i> . De Quincey: <i>Confessions of an Opium-Eater</i> . Heine's first poems. Manzoni: <i>Adelchi</i> .	1830-61. PERIOD OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY Discovery of Venus of Milo.

- Victor Hugo : *Han d'Islande*.  
 Lamartine : *Nouvelles Méditations*.  
 Thiers : *Histoire de la Révolution française*.  
 1823-5. Stendhal : *Racine et Shakespeare*.  
 1824. Foundation of *Le Globe*.  
 Victor Hugo : *Bug Jargol*.  
 Mignet : *La Révolution française*.  
 1825. Mérimée : *Théâtre de Clara Gauthier*.  
 Thierry : *Histoire de la Conquête d'Angleterre*.  
 1826. Vigny : *Poèmes antiques et modernes*.  
 " *Cinq-Mars*.  
 Saint-Simon : *Le Nouveau Christianisme*.  
 1827. Hugo : *Cromwell* and *Préface de Cromwell*.  
 Thierry : *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France*.  
 1828. Sainte-Beuve : *Tableau de la poésie française au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle*.  
 Villemain : *Cours de Littérature française*.  
 Guizot : lectures at the Sorbonne.  
 1829. Dumas : *Henri III et sa cour*.  
 Mérimée : *Chronique de Charles IX*.  
 Victor Hugo : *Les Orientales*.  
 Lamartine : *Harmonies poétiques*.  
 1829-50. Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*.  
 1830. Victor Hugo : *Hernani*.  
 Théophile Gautier : *Premières Poésies*.  
 Nusslet : *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*.  
 Charles Nodier : *Contes*.  
 1830-42. Comte : *Cours de philosophie positive*.  
 1831. Victor Hugo : *Les Feuilles d'Automne*.  
 " " *Marion Delorme*.  
 " " *Notre-Dame de Paris*.  
 Stendhal : *Le Rouge et le Noir*.  
 Barbier : *Jambes et Poèmes*.  
 Bulz founds *Revue des deux Mondes*.  
 Scott : *Quentin Durward*.  
 Lamb : *Essays of Elia* (first series).  
 Lander's *Imaginary Conversations*.  
 Mary Mitford : *Our Village*.  
 Leopardi : *Canzoni*.  
 1825. Tegner's *Frihtolisaag*.  
 1825-60. LITERATURE OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY  
 Heine's *Harreise*.  
 Hauff's *Lichtenstein*.  
 Leopardi : *Operette morali*.  
 Manzoni : *I Promessi Sposi*.  
 Keble's *Christian Year*.  
 Heine : *Buch der Lieder*.  
 Foundation of the *Athenæum* and of the *Spectator*.  
 Washington Irving : *Conquest of Granada*.  
 Mickiewicz : *Conrad Wallenrod*.  
 Tennyson : *Poems, chiefly lyrical*.  
 Pushkin : *Boris Godounov*.  
 Charnisso : *Gedichte*.  
 Foundation of National Gallery in London.  
 1826. Opening of Stephenson's railway from Stockport to Darlington.  
 Foundation of University of London.  
 Liszt settles in Paris and becomes acquainted with George Sand, Lamartine, Hugo, etc.  
 † Schubert.  
 Catholic Emancipation Act.  
 Chopin's début as a pianist.  
 Omnibuses introduced in London.  
 Opening of Liverpool and Manchester Railway.  
 July Revolution in Paris. Louis-Philippe becomes king.  
 Russian-Poland revolts ineffectually. Consequent emigration of Poles.  
 Cuvier and Saint-Hilaire discuss creation of animal types.  
 Thimonnier patents a sewing-machine.  
 1830-47. French Conquest of Algeria.  
 1831. † Hegel.  
 Faraday obtains electric currents from magnetism.  
 Mendelssohn settles in Paris.  
 The works of the Barbizon school are exhibited at the salon.



THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—*continued*

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
ROMANTIC MOVEMENT— <i>continued</i>	LITERATURE OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY— <i>continued</i>	PERIOD OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY— <i>continued</i>
1832. Victor Hugo : <i>Le Roi s'amuse</i> . Vigny : <i>Stello</i> . George Sand : <i>Indiana</i> .	Goethe : <b>Faust, Part II</b> . Lenau : <i>Gedichte</i> . Silvio Pellico : <i>Le mie Prigioni</i> .	† Goethe. Mazzini founds the "Giovane Italia." Invention of Telegraphy. Philippon, Henri Monnier, and Gavarni found French caricature.
1833. Victor Hugo : <i>Lucrèce Borgia</i> . Balzac : <b>Eugénie Grandet</b> .	Robert Browning : <i>Pauline</i> . Carlyle : <i>Sartor Resartus</i> . Lamb's <i>Last Essays of Elia</i> . Massimo d'Azeglio : <i>Ettore Fieramosca</i> .	
1833-67. <b>Michelet</b> : <i>Histoire de France</i> . 1834. Lamennais : <i>Paroles d'un Croyant</i> . Balzac : <b>Le Père Goriot</b> .	Bulwer Lytton : <i>The Last Days of Pompeii</i> . <i>Sketches by Boz</i> . Mickiewicz : <i>Uladzius</i> . Browning : <i>Paracelsus</i> . Hans Andersen's first fairy-tales.	† Schleiermacher. Schumann's Symphonic Studies.
1835. Hugo : <i>Les Chants du Crépuscule</i> . Vigny : <b>Servitude et grandeur Militaires</b> . <i>Chatterton</i> . De Tocqueville : <i>La Démocratie en Amérique</i> .	1835. Dickens : <i>Pickwick Papers</i> .	Lacordaire preaches at Notre-Dame.
Lamartine : <i>Voyage en Orient</i> . 1835-40. <b>Musset</b> : <b>Les Nuits</b> . 1836. Lamartine : <i>Joelynn</i> . Musset : <i>Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle</i> .		Arc de Triomphe completed.
Cousin : <i>Du Vrai, du Beau, du Bien</i> . Victor Hugo : <i>Les Voix Intérieures</i> . Lamennais : <i>Leve du Peuple</i> .	Carlyle's <i>French Revolution</i> . Barham : <i>Ingoldsby Legends</i> . Eckermann publishes his conversations with Goethe. Eichendorff's <i>Gedichte</i> .	Accession of Queen Victoria. Froebel institutes his first Kindergarten. Pitman invents system of shorthand.
Victor Hugo : <i>Ruy Blas</i> . Rachel's début revives classical tragedy. Lamartine : <i>La Chute d'un Ange</i> .	Dickens : <b>Oliver Twist</b> .	Lacordaire revives Dominican order in France.
1839. Lamartine : <i>Recueils poétiques</i> . Stendhal : <b>La Chartreuse de Parme</b> . George Sand : <i>Spiritism</i> and <i>Les Sept Cordes de la lyre</i> .	Dickens : <b>Nicholas Nickleby</b> . Longfellow : <i>Hyperion</i> .	Daguerre invents a process of photography. Turner's <i>Fighting Téméraire</i> . French conquests in Algeria.

Charlotte Brontë: **Jane Eyre.**  
Emerson delivers course of lectures in  
England and Scotland on *Representative  
Men.*

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—continued

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
ROMANTIC MOVEMENT—continued  1848. George Sand : <b>La petite Fadette</b> . Jules Sandeau : <i>Mademoiselle de la Séguinière</i> .	LITERATURE OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY—continued  Matthew Arnold's first Poems. Macaulay's <i>History of England</i> (1st 2 vols.)  1848-50. Thackeray : <b>Pendennis</b> .	PERIOD OF THE RISORGIMENTO IN ITALY—continued 1848-1871. POLITICAL UNIFICATION OF GERMANY February Revolution in France. Louis-Philippe abdicates. Slavery abolished in French colonies. Garibaldi raises volunteer army of 3,000 men to aid King of Sardinia against the Austrians. Holman Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti found Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.
1849. Chateaubriand : <i>Mémoires d'Outre-tombe</i> . Lamartine : <i>Confidences</i> ; <i>Raphaël</i> . Seribe : <i>Adrienne Lecouvreur</i> .	Ruskin : <i>Seven Lamps of Architecture</i> . Fernán Caballero : <i>La Gaviota</i> .  1850-1900. VICTORIAN AGE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE Tennyson : <i>In Memoriam</i> . E. B. Browning : <i>Sonnets from the Portuguese</i> . Dickens : <b>David Copperfield</b> . Otto Ludwig : <i>Der Erbfürster</i> . Karl Gutzkow ; <i>Der Ritter vom Geist</i> . 1851. Ruskin : <i>Stones of Venice</i> , I. Borrow : <i>Lavengro</i> . Heine : <i>Romanzero</i> . Gioberti : <i>Rinascimento civile d'Italia</i> . Thackeray : <b>Esmond</b> . Hebbel : <i>Apres Bernauer</i> . Freytag : <i>Die Journalisten</i> . Storm : <i>Immensee</i> .	† Chopin. Courbet exhibits at the Salon. Garibaldi evacuates Rome. 1849-56. Livingstone crosses Africa from West to East.  Wagner's <i>Lohengrin</i> .
NEO-ROMANTICISM c. 1850-c. 1885. REALISM AND NATURALISM  1850. † Balzac.		Great Exhibition of London. Coup d'Etat in Paris. First Submarine telegraph—Dover to Calais. Perkin creates industry of coal-tar colours. Foundation of Owen's College, Manchester.  Napoleon III proclaimed Emperor. Cavour becomes prime minister of Sardinia.
1850-1869. Sainte-Beuve : <b>Causeries du Lundi</b> . 1851. Lamartine : <i>Nouvelles Confidences</i> . Murger : <i>Scènes de la Vie de Bohème</i> (in book form).		1852-7. Formation of the six great Railway Companies of France.
1852. Lamartine : <i>Graciosa</i> . George Sand : <i>Les Maîtres-Sonnets</i> . Victor Hugo : <b>Les Châtiments</b> . Dumas fils : <i>La Dame aux Camélias</i> . Théophile Gautier : <b>Emaux et Camées</b> . Leconte de Lisle : <b>Poèmes Antiques</b> . Henri Monnier : <i>Graniqueur et Décadence de Joseph Prud'homme</i> .		

1853. Taine : *Essai sur la Fontaine*.
1854. Emile Augier : *Le Gendre de M. Poirier*.  
Foundation of the *Figaro*.  
Seven Provençal poets, among them  
Mistral found the *Félibrige*.
1855. Musset : *Comédies et Proverbes*.  
Gerard de Nerval : *Le Rêve et la Vie*.  
Champfleury : *Les Bourgeois de Molinchart*.  
Renan : *Essais d'histoire religieuse*.
1856. Théodore de Banville : *Odelettes*.  
De Tocqueville : *L'Ancien Régime*.
1857. Flaubert : *Madame Bovary*.  
Baudelaire : *Les Fleurs du Mal*.  
Banville : *Odes Funambulesques*.  
Champfleury : *Le Réalisme*.  
Taine : *Essais de critique et d'histoire*.
- 1857-8. Fromentin : *Sahara et Sahel*.
1858. Feuilleton : *Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre*.
1859. Hugo : *Légende des Siècles, I*.  
Renan : *Essais de Morale et de Critique*.  
Labiche : *Voyage de M. Perrichon*.  
Erckmann and Chatrian begin to collaborate.
- Mistral : *Mireio*.
1860. Montalembert : *Moines de l'Occident*.
1861. George Sand : *Le Marquis de Villemer*.  
Michelet : *La Mer*.
- Dickens : *Black House*.  
Thackeray : *The Newcomes*.  
Charlotte Brontë : *Villette*.  
Kingsley : *Westward Ho*.  
Thoreau : *Walden*.  
Gottfried Keller : *Der grüne Heinrich*.
- Browning : *Men and Women*.  
Whitman : *Leaves of Grass*.  
Tennyson : *Maud*.  
Freitag : *Soll und Haben*.  
E. B. Browning : *Aurora Leigh*.  
Laube : *Graf Essex*.
- George Eliot : *Scenes of Clerical Life*.  
Anthony Trollope : *Barchester Towers*.  
Tennyson : *Idylls of the Kings*.  
Scheffel : *Eckhardt*.  
Carducci : *Rime*.
- William Morris : *Defence of Guinevere*.  
Björnsen : *Arne*.
- Dickens : *Tale of Two Cities*.  
George Meredith : *Order of Richard Feverel*.  
Fitzgerald : *Omoo*.  
J. S. Mill : *On Liberty*.  
Gontcharov : *Obolomov*.  
Freitag : *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit*.
- George Eliot : *Mill on the Floss*.  
D. G. Rossetti : *Early Italian Poets*.  
Tolstoi : *War and Peace*.
- 1859-62. Freitag : *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit*.
- 1860-90. Carducci leads ANTI-ROMANTIC  
REVOLT in Italy.  
George Eliot : *Silas Marner*.
- Canals from Marne to Rhine and Rhône to  
Rhine completed.  
1853-69. Haussmann modernizes Paris.
- 1854-6. Crimean War.
- † Schumann.  
The Indian Mutiny.  
Algeria finally conquered by France.
- Miracles at Lourdes.  
First Transatlantic cable laid.  
César Franck becomes organist at Sainte-Clotilde  
(Paris).
- Darwin : *Origin of Species*.  
Lesseps begins to construct the Suez Canal.  
The French seize Annam.
- 1860-70. DECLINE OF SECOND FRENCH  
EMPIRE  
Garibaldi and the Thousand land in Sicily and  
take Palermo.  
Coquelin makes his début at the Comédie fran-  
caise.  
Millet : *L'Angélus*.
- 1861-70. THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY  
Victor Emmanuel II, first King of United Italy.  
American Civil War begins.  
Abraham Lincoln, President of United States.  
William I, King of Prussia.  
† Prince Consort.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—*continued*

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
<b>REALISM AND NATURALISM—<i>continued</i></b> 1862. Victor Hugo : <i>Les Misérables</i> . Flaubert : <i>Salammbo</i> . Leconte de Lisle : <i>Poèmes Barbares</i> . Fromentin : <i>Dominique</i> . Gautier : <i>Le Capitaine Fracasse</i> . Renan : <i>Vie de Jésus</i> . Taine : <i>Histoire de la Littérature anglaise</i> . Littré's Dictionary. 1863-72. Sainte-Beuve : <i>Nouveaux Lundis</i> . 1864. E. et J. de Goncourt : <i>René Maupérin</i> . Zola : <i>Contes à Ninon</i> . Erekmann-Chatrian : <i>L'Ami Fritz</i> . Alfred de Vigny : <i>Les Destinées</i> (posthumous). Michelet : <i>La Bête de l'Humanité</i> . Fustel de Coullanges : <i>La Cité Antique</i> . Erekmann-Chatrian : <i>Waterloo</i> . Sardou : <i>La Famille Benoîtton</i> . Sully Prudhomme : <i>Stances et Poèmes</i> . Gaston Paris : <i>Histoire poétique de Charlemagne</i> . 1866. <i>Le Parmasse Contemporain</i> . Coppée : <i>Le Reliquaire</i> . Hugo : <i>Les Travailleurs de la Mer</i> . Taine : <i>Voyage en Italie</i> . 1867. Vigny : <i>Journal d'un Poète</i> (posthumous). Judith Gautier : <i>Le Livre de Jade</i> —poèmes chinois. Ravaisson : <i>Rapport sur la philosophie française au xix<sup>e</sup> siècle</i> . Daudet : <i>Le Petit Chose</i> . Taine : <i>Vie et Opinions de Thomas-Frédéric Grandjean</i> . 1868.	<b>VICTORIAN AGE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE—<i>continued</i></b> 1862. George Meredith : <i>Poems and Ballads</i> . Ruskin : <i>Unto this Last</i> . Turgenev : <i>Fathers and Children</i> . George Eliot : <i>Romola</i> . Kingsley : <i>Water-Babies</i> . Newman : <i>Apologia pro Vita Sua</i> . 1863. Swinburne : <i>Atlanta in Calydon</i> . Tennyson : <i>Enoch Arden</i> , etc. Freytag : <i>Die Verlorene Handschrift</i> . C. F. Meyer : <i>Gedichte</i> . Ruskin : <i>Ethics of the Dust ; Sesame and Lilies</i> . Matthew Arnold : <i>Essays in Criticism</i> . Meredith : <i>Rhoda Fleming</i> . Lewis Carroll : <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> . Mrs. Gaskell : <i>Wives and Daughters</i> . Ruskin : <i>Grown of Wild Olives</i> . Swinburne : <i>Poems and Ballads</i> . Ibsen : <i>Brand</i> . Dostoevski : <i>Crime and Punishment</i> . Trollope : <i>Last Chronicles of Barset</i> . Froude : <i>Short Studies on Great Subjects</i> . d'Azeulho : <i>I Miei Ricordi</i> . Ippolito Nievo : <i>Confessioni di un Ottuagenario</i> . Browning : <i>The Ring and the Book</i> . William Morris : <i>The Earthly Paradise</i> . De Coster : <i>Til Eulenspiegel</i> .	<b>THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY—<i>continued</i></b> French intervention in Mexico. Huxley : <i>Man's Place in Nature</i> . <i>Le Petit Journal</i> —first halfpenny daily in France. Whistler's <i>Symphony in White</i> . Organization of International Red Cross Society. Foundation of International Working Men's Association. Assassination of President Lincoln. Lister introduces antiseptic surgery at Glasgow Infirmary. Mendel publishes an account of his experiment dealing with the physiological process of heredity. Wagner's <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> . 1866. Marx : <i>Das Kapital</i> . Rossetti's <i>Beata Beatrix</i> . Venetia gained for Italy. First International Exhibition at Paris. Wagner : <i>Die Meistersinger</i> . Foundation of Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.



- Haeckel's History of Creation.**  
 Opening of Suez Canal.  
 United Italy.  
 Temporal Sovereignty of the Pope comes to an end. Rome becomes capital of Italy.  
 1870-71. Franco-Prussian War.  
 1871-1914. "THE ERA OF THE BENEVOLENT BOURGEOISIE."  
 1871. Darwin's *Descent of Man*.  
 Thiers, first President of Third French Republic.  
 First Impressionist Exhibition in Paris.  
 † Mazzini.  
 Brahms completes his *Requiem*.  
 Foundation of French School of Rome.  
 Foundation of Concerts Colonne.  
 Moussorgski's opera *Boris Godounov*.  
 Completion of Paris Opera House.  
 Réjane makes her début.  
 Bell invents a telephone.  
 Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungen* performed.  
 Puvion de Chavannes frescoes the Pantheon.  
 1877. Stanley finds mouth of Congo.  
 Queen Victoria becomes Empress of India.  
 Saint-Saëns: *Samson et Dalila* produced by Litzst at Weimar.  
 1878. Electric lighting introduced.  
 Second International Exhibition in Paris.
- Dostoevski: **The Idiot**.  
 Ruskin: *Queen of the Air*.  
 De Amicis: *La Vita Militaire*.  
 D. G. Rossetti: *Poems*.  
 1871. Hardy: *Desperate Remedies*.  
 Samuel Butler: *Erewhon*.  
 Swinburne: *Songs before Sunrise*.  
 Hardy: *Under the Greenwood Tree*.  
 Nietzsche: *Geburt der Tragödie*.  
 Pater: *Studies in the Renaissance*.  
 Matthew Arnold: *Literature and Dogma*.  
 Thomson: *City of Dreadful Night*.  
 Alarcón: *El Sombbrero de tres picos*.  
 Juan Valera: *Peptita Jimenez*.  
 Ruskin: *Mornings in Florence, I*.  
 George Eliot: *Daniel Deronda*.  
 Dahn: *Kampf um Rom*.  
 Perez Galdos: *Doña Perfecta*.  
 Ibsen: *Pillars of Society*.  
 Tolstoi: *Anna Karenina*.  
 Turgeniev: *Virgin Soil*.  
 Carducci: *Odi Barbare*.  
 Stevenson: *An Inland Voyage*.  
 Henry James: *The American*.  
 Keller: *Züricher Novellen*.  
 Renato Fucini: *Napoli a occhio nudo*.  
 Pereda: *Don Gonzalo Gonzalez de la Gonzalera*.
- Michelet: *La Montagne*.  
 Prévoist-Paradol: *La France Nouvelle*.  
 Flaubert: *L'Education Sentimentale*.  
 Victor Hugo: *L'Homme qui rit*.  
 Coppée: *Le Passant*.  
 Sully Prudhomme: *Solitudes*.  
 Verlaine: *La Bonne Chanson*.  
 Fromentin: *Les maîtres d'Autrefois*.  
 Taine: *De l'Intelligence*.  
 1871-93. Zola: *Les Rougon-Macquart*.  
 1872. Daudet: *Tartarin de Tarascon*.  
 Feuilleton: *Julia de Trévoux*.  
 Victor Hugo: *L'Année Terrible*.  
 Coppée: *Les Humbles*.  
 1872-93. Taine: *Origines de la France contemporaine*.  
 Rimbaud: *Une Saison en Enfer*.  
 Ferdinand Fabre: *L'Abbé Tigrane*.  
 Victor Hugo: *Quatre-vingt-treize*.  
 Zola: *Nouveaux Contes à Ninon*.  
 Verlaine: *Romances sans Paroles*.  
 Sully Prudhomme: *Les Vaines Tendresses*.  
 Banville: *Trente-six Ballades Joyeuses*.  
 Hugo: *Légende des Siècles, II*.  
 Mallarmé: *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*.  
 Richerpin: *Chanson des Gueux*.  
 1877. Flaubert: *Trois Contes*.  
 E. de Goncourt: *La Fille Elisa*.  
 Victor Hugo: *L'Art d'être grand-père*.  
 1878. S. Prudhomme: *La Justice and Zénith*.  
 E. Augier: *Les Fourchambault*.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—continued

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
<p><b>REALISM AND NATURALISM—continued</b></p> <p>1880. Zola : <i>Le Roman Expérimental</i>.  Brunetière : <i>Le Roman Naturaliste</i>.  1881. Verlaïne : <i>Sagesse</i>.  Hugo : <i>Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit</i>.  Anatole France : <i>Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard</i>.  Camille Lemonnier : <i>Un Mâle</i>.  Pailleron : <i>Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie</i>.  Ferdinand Fabre : <i>Mon oncle Célestin</i>.  Daudet : <i>Numa Roumestan</i>.  Henri Becque : <i>Les Corbreaux</i>.</p> <p>1882. Renan : <i>Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse</i>.  Amiel : <i>Journal Intime</i>.  Bourget : <i>Essais de Psychologie contemporaine</i>.  Pierre Loti : <i>Mon Frère Yves</i>.  Leconte de Lisle : <i>Poèmes Tragiques</i>.  1884. Verlaïne : <i>Jadis et Naguère</i>.  Georges Ohnet : <i>Le Maître de Forges</i>.  Foundation of <i>Revue Indépendante</i>.</p> <p>c. 1885–1900. THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT  † Victor Hugo.  Foundation of <i>Revue Wagnérienne</i>.  Jules Laforgue : <i>Les Complains</i>.  Jean Moréas : <i>Les Syrtes</i>.</p>	<p><b>VICTORIAN AGE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE—continued</b></p> <p>1879. Meredith : <i>The Egoist</i>.  Stevenson : <i>Travels with a Donkey</i>.  H. James : <i>Daisy Miller</i>.  Ibsen's <i>Doll's House</i>.  1879–94. Treitschke : <i>Deutsche Geschichte des 19ten Jahrhunderts</i>.  Rossetti : <i>Ballads and Sonnets</i>.  Dostoevski : <i>The Brothers Karamasov</i>.  Ibsen's <i>Ghosts</i>.  Wildebruch : <i>Die Karolinger</i>.  Carl Spitteler : <i>Prometheus u. Epimetheus</i>.  Verga : <i>I Malavoglia</i>.  Giuseppe Giacosa : <i>Una partita a scacchi</i>.  Stevenson : <i>New Arabian Nights</i>.</p> <p>Stevenson : <i>Treasure Island</i>.  Palacio Valdés : <i>Marta y Maria</i>.</p> <p>1883–91. Nietzsche : <i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i>.  Renato Fucini : <i>Le Veglie di Neri</i>.  De Amicis : <i>Alle Porte d'Italia</i>.</p> <p>G. B. Shaw : <i>Widowers' Houses</i>.  Walter Pater : <i>Marius the Epicurean</i>.  Fogazzaro : <i>Daniel Cortis</i>.  Palacio Valdés : <i>José</i>.</p>	<p>"THE ERA OF THE BENEVOLENT BOURGEOISIE"—continued.  Alsace-Lorraine declared a Reichsland.  Koch and his pupils develop germ theory and lay foundations of bacteriology.</p> <p>Cologne Cathedral completed.</p> <p>French Protectorate over Upper Niger established.</p> <p>Introduction of three-colour printing process.</p> <p>Foundation of Concerts Lamoureux in Paris.  Dvůřak : <i>Slavbat Mater</i>.</p> <p>Triple Alliance between Italy, Germany, Austria.  † Garibaldi.  Elementary education made compulsory in France.</p> <p>Britain occupies Egypt.  French Protectorate over Annam established.  The Orient Express from Paris to Constantinople in 75 hours.</p> <p>Tonkin becomes a French colony.</p> <p>Canadian Pacific Railway completed.</p>

1886.	Anatole France : <i>Le Livre de mon Ami</i> . Rembaud : <i>Les Illuminations</i> . Vogüé : <i>Le Roman Russe</i> . Feuillet : <i>La Mort</i> . Pierre Loti : <i>Pêcheur d'Islande</i> . Drumont : <i>La France Juive</i> . Kahn : <i>Palais Nomades</i> . André Antoine founds the Théâtre Libre.	Tennyson : <i>Locksley Hall</i> .	† Liszt.
1887.	Renan : <i>Histoire du Peuple d'Israël</i> . Maupassant : <i>Pierre et Jean</i> . Mallarmé : <i>Poésies</i> . Villiers de l'Isle Adam : <i>L'Eve future</i> . Jules Lemaitre begins his <i>Impressions de Théâtre</i> . Bergson : <i>Les Données Immédiates de la Conscience</i> .	Kipling : <i>Plain Tales from the Hills</i> . Sudermann : <i>Frau Sorge</i> . Carducci : <i>Rime Nuove</i> . L. Pardo Bazán : <i>La Madre Naturaleza</i> .	Boulanger's plot in France.  Pasteur Institute opened in Paris.
1888.	Maurice Barrès : <i>Le Jardin de Bérénice</i> . Maupassant : <i>Fort Comme la Mort</i> . Bourget : <i>Le Disciple</i> . Verlaine : <i>Parallèlement</i> . Foundation of <i>Mercury de France</i> .	Browning's <i>Asolando</i> . Barrie : <i>A Window in Thrums</i> . Liliencron's first poems. Sudermann : <i>Die Ehre</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Vor Sonnenaufgang</i> . Matilde Serao : <i>All'erta sentimentella!</i> Hauptmann : <i>Das Friedensfest</i> .	Third International Exhibition at Paris. International Socialist Congress in Paris. Franco-Russian Entente.
1889.	Verhaeren : <i>Les Flambeaux Noirs</i> . Maeterlinck : <i>Les Aveugles</i> . Villiers de l'Isle Adam : <i>Axël</i> . Claudé : <i>Tête d'Or</i> . Renan : <i>L'Avenir de la Science</i> (written 1848).	Kipling : <i>The Light that Failed</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Einsame Menschen</i> . Pascoli : <i>Myrica</i> . Serao : <i>Il paese di Cuccagna</i> . W. B. Yeats : <i>The Countess Kathleen</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Die Weber</i> . Palacio Valdés : <i>La Fé</i> . Jacinto Benavente : <i>Teatro fantástico</i> . Hardy : <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> . Stevenson : <i>Cariona</i> . Sudermann : <i>Heimat</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Hannele Himmelstahel</i> . Panzerini : <i>Il Libro dei Morti</i> .	1890-1914. THE GERMAN EMPIRE UNDER WILLIAM II. French Protectorate over Madagascar recognized. Fall of Bismarck. First May Day Celebrations of Labour held. Opening of Forth Bridge.
1890.	Jean Moréas : <i>Le Pèlerin passionné</i> .	Kipling : <i>The Light that Failed</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Einsame Menschen</i> . Serao : <i>Il paese di Cuccagna</i> . W. B. Yeats : <i>The Countess Kathleen</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Die Weber</i> . Palacio Valdés : <i>La Fé</i> . Jacinto Benavente : <i>Teatro fantástico</i> . Hardy : <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> . Stevenson : <i>Cariona</i> . Sudermann : <i>Heimat</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Hannele Himmelstahel</i> . Panzerini : <i>Il Libro dei Morti</i> .	1890-1914. THE GERMAN EMPIRE UNDER WILLIAM II. French Protectorate over Madagascar recognized. Fall of Bismarck. First May Day Celebrations of Labour held. Opening of Forth Bridge.
1891.	Jean Moréas : <i>Le Pèlerin passionné</i> .	Kipling : <i>The Light that Failed</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Einsame Menschen</i> . Serao : <i>Il paese di Cuccagna</i> . W. B. Yeats : <i>The Countess Kathleen</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Die Weber</i> . Palacio Valdés : <i>La Fé</i> . Jacinto Benavente : <i>Teatro fantástico</i> . Hardy : <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> . Stevenson : <i>Cariona</i> . Sudermann : <i>Heimat</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Hannele Himmelstahel</i> . Panzerini : <i>Il Libro dei Morti</i> .	1890-1914. THE GERMAN EMPIRE UNDER WILLIAM II. French Protectorate over Madagascar recognized. Fall of Bismarck. First May Day Celebrations of Labour held. Opening of Forth Bridge.
1892.	Zola : <i>La Débâcle</i> . Claudel : <i>La Ville</i> . Rodenbach : <i>Bruges-la-Morte</i> .	Kipling : <i>The Light that Failed</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Einsame Menschen</i> . Serao : <i>Il paese di Cuccagna</i> . W. B. Yeats : <i>The Countess Kathleen</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Die Weber</i> . Palacio Valdés : <i>La Fé</i> . Jacinto Benavente : <i>Teatro fantástico</i> . Hardy : <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> . Stevenson : <i>Cariona</i> . Sudermann : <i>Heimat</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Hannele Himmelstahel</i> . Panzerini : <i>Il Libro dei Morti</i> .	1890-1914. THE GERMAN EMPIRE UNDER WILLIAM II. French Protectorate over Madagascar recognized. Fall of Bismarck. First May Day Celebrations of Labour held. Opening of Forth Bridge.
1893.	Hérédia : <i>Les Trophées</i> . Verlaine : <i>Mes Prisons</i> . Samain : <i>Au Jardin de l'Enfant</i> . Francis Vielé-Griffin : <i>La Chevauchée d'Yvelis</i> . Verhaeren : <i>Les Campagnes hallucinées</i> . Sardou : <i>Madame Sans-Gêne</i> . Lugné-Poe founds the Théâtre de l'Œuvre.	Kipling : <i>The Light that Failed</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Einsame Menschen</i> . Serao : <i>Il paese di Cuccagna</i> . W. B. Yeats : <i>The Countess Kathleen</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Die Weber</i> . Palacio Valdés : <i>La Fé</i> . Jacinto Benavente : <i>Teatro fantástico</i> . Hardy : <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> . Stevenson : <i>Cariona</i> . Sudermann : <i>Heimat</i> . Hauptmann : <i>Hannele Himmelstahel</i> . Panzerini : <i>Il Libro dei Morti</i> .	1890-1914. THE GERMAN EMPIRE UNDER WILLIAM II. French Protectorate over Madagascar recognized. Fall of Bismarck. First May Day Celebrations of Labour held. Opening of Forth Bridge.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—continued

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
<p>THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT—continued</p> <p>1894. Jules Laforgue : <i>Poésies complètes</i>. Rostand : <i>Les Romanesques</i>. Maeterlinck : <i>Trois petits drames pour marionnettes</i>. François de Curel : <i>La Nouvelle Idole</i>. Léon Frapié : <i>La Maternelle</i>.</p>	<p>VICTORIAN AGE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE—continued</p> <p>1894. Kipling's <i>Jungle Book</i>. George Moore : <i>Esther Waters</i>. Oscar Wilde : <i>Importance of Being Earnest</i>. W. B. Yeats : <i>Land of Heart's Desire</i>. Henry Harland founds the <i>Yellow Book</i>. D'Annunzio : <i>Trionfo della Morte</i>. W. B. Yeats : <i>Poems</i>. Fontane : <i>Efti Brist</i>.</p>	<p>THE GERMAN EMPIRE UNDER WILLIAM II—continued</p> <p>Casimir Périer, President of French Republic. War between China and Japan. The French take Timbuctoo.</p>
<p>1895. Leconte de Lisle : <i>Derniers Poèmes</i>. <b>Verhaeren</b> : <i>Les Villages Illusoires</i> ; <i>Le Villes Tentaculaires</i>. Rostand : <i>La Princesse Lointaine</i>. Coppié : <i>Pour la Couronne</i>. Hervieu : <i>Les Tentaciles</i>. Gustave Le Bon : <i>La Psychologie des Foules</i>. Durkheim : <i>Règles de la méthode sociologique</i>. Verhaeren : <i>Les Heures claires</i>. Paul Fort : <i>Ballades</i>, 1re série. Fouillée : <i>Le Mouvement idéaliste et la réaction contre la science positive</i>.</p>	<p>1895. W. B. Yeats : <i>Land of Heart's Desire</i>. Henry Harland founds the <i>Yellow Book</i>. D'Annunzio : <i>Trionfo della Morte</i>. W. B. Yeats : <i>Poems</i>. Fontane : <i>Efti Brist</i>.</p>	<p>Trial and condemnation of Dreyfus. Nansen reaches farthest north.</p> <p>Invention of wireless telegraphy. Röntgen discovers X-rays.</p> <p>First Automobile Club founded in France.</p>
<p>1896–1901. Anatole France : <i>Histoire contemporaine</i>.</p>	<p>A. E. Housman : <i>A Shropshire Lad</i>. Wildenbruch : <i>Heinrich und Heinrichs Geschichte</i>. Fogazzaro : <i>Piccolo Mondo Antico</i>.</p>	<p>Madame Curie discovers radium.</p> <p>Alfred Nobel, a Swede, founds five annual international prizes—three for eminence in science, one for excellence in idealistic literature, and one for greatest service to cause of international peace.</p> <p>Edmond de Goncourt leaves money for the foundation of an Academy.</p> <p>Annexation of Madagascar by France.</p>
<p>1897. Rostand : <i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i>. Maurice Barrès : <i>Les Déracinés</i>. Régnier : <i>Jeux rustiques et divins</i>. Kahn : <i>Le Livre des Images</i>. Fernand Gregh : <i>La Maison de l'Enfance</i>.</p>	<p>Publication of Browning Letters. Sir Henry Newbolt : <i>Admirals All</i>. Henry James : <i>What Maisie Knew</i>. Sudermann : <i>Johannes</i>. Hauptmann : <i>Die Versunkene Glocke</i>. Renato Fucini : <i>All' Aria aperta</i>. G. B. Shaw : <i>Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant</i>. William James : <i>In the Cage</i>. Fressen : <i>Die drei Getreuen</i>. <b>D'Annunzio</b> : <i>Il Fuoco</i> ; <i>La Città Morte</i>.</p>	<p>Boulanger Plot defeated.</p> <p>Beginning of Dreyfus agitation.</p> <p>The Tate Gallery opened.</p> <p>† Bismarck.</p>
<p>1898. Huysmans : <i>La Cathédrale</i>. Paul et Victor Marguerite : <i>Le Désastre</i>. Verhaeren : <i>Les Aubes</i>, drame lyrique. Francis Jammes : <i>De l'Angélus de l'Aube à l'Angélus du soir</i>.</p>	<p>1898. William James : <i>In the Cage</i>. Fressen : <i>Die drei Getreuen</i>. <b>D'Annunzio</b> : <i>Il Fuoco</i> ; <i>La Città Morte</i>.</p>	<p>Scriabin becomes Professor of pianoforte at Moscow Conservatorium.</p> <p>Rodin exhibits <i>Le Baiser</i> and <i>Balzac</i> at the Salon.</p>

1899.	<p>Jaume : <i>Chansons de France</i>.  Maeterlinck : <i>La Sagesse et la Destinée</i>.  Bergson : <i>Matière et Mémoire</i>.  Verhaeren : <i>Les Visages de la Vie</i>.  Jean Moréas : <i>Stances</i>.  Paul Fort : <i>Le Roman de Louis XI</i>  (Ballades, 3<sup>e</sup> série).  Claudel : <i>La jeune fille Violaine</i>.  Anatole France : <i>Pierre Nozière</i>.  Louis Bertrand : <i>Le Sang des Races</i>.  Esterlin : <i>Le Ferment</i>.  René Bazin : <i>La Terre qui meurt</i>.  Remy de Gourmont : <i>Esthétique de la langue française</i>.</p>	<p>Jaume Delavente. <i>Les Contes de las Fieras</i>.  W. B. Yeats : <i>The Wind Among the Reeds</i>.  D'Annunzio : <i>La Gioconda</i>.  Rubén Darío : <i>Prosas profanas</i>.</p>	<p>Outbreak of Boer War.  First Hague Peace Conference.  Dreyfus pardoned.  Marconi's experiments in wireless telegraphy.</p>
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## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
<p>1900-1914. THE NEW IDEALISM AND THE</p> <p>1900. Charles Péguy founds the <i>Cahiers de la Quinzaine</i>. Henri de Régnier : <i>Les Médailles d'Argile</i>. Jammes : <i>Le Deuil des Primevères</i>. Rostand : <i>L'Aiglon</i>. Brieux : <i>La Robe Rouge</i>. Rémy de Gourmont : <i>La Culture des Idées</i>. Gabriel Tarde : <i>Les Lois de l'Imitation</i>. Henri Bordeaux : <i>Le pays natal</i>.</p>	<p>NEW REALISM</p> <p>Conrad : <i>Lord Jim</i>. Clara Viebig : <i>Das tägliche Brot</i>. Chehov : <i>The Three Sisters</i>. Tolstoi : <i>Resurrection</i>. Rovetta : <i>Romanticismo</i>. Giacosa : <i>Come le foglie</i>. Grazia Deledda : <i>Il Vecchio della Montagna</i>.</p>	<p>THE NEW IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA AND THE EAST</p> <p>Fourth International Exhibition in Paris. Construction of Pont Alexandre III with adjoining Petit et Grand Palais. Rediscovery of Mendel's work on heredity.</p>
<p>1901. Comtesse de Noailles : <i>Le Cœur innombrable</i>. Jammes : <i>Le Triomphe de la Vie</i>. Samain : <i>Le Chariot d'Or</i>. Maeterlinck : <i>La Vie des Abeilles</i>. Gabriel Tarde : <i>L'Opinion et la Foule</i>. Henri de Régulier : <i>La Cité des Eaux</i>. Verhaeren : <i>Les Forces tumultueuses</i>. Saint-Georges de Bouhélier : <i>Chants de la Vie ardente</i>. André Gide : <i>L'Immoraliste</i>. Henri Bordeaux : <i>La Peur de Vivre</i>. Rémy de Gourmont : <i>Le Chemin de Véloirs</i>.</p>	<p>1900-1904. Carl Spitteler : <i>Olympischer Frühling</i>. 1901. Kipling : <i>Kim</i>. Gustav Frenssen : <i>Jörn Uhl</i>. Fogazzaro : <i>Piccolo Mondo Moderno</i>. Luigi Capuana : <i>Il Marchese di Roccaverdina</i>. 1902. Arnold Bennett : <i>Anna of the Five Towns</i>. Giovanni Marradi : <i>Poesie</i>.</p>	<p>† Queen Victoria. † Trans-Siberian Railway opened. French Treaty with Morocco. Combes' Association's Act. Theodore Roosevelt, President of U.S.A. De Bussy's Opera : <i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>. Foundation of Cecil Rhodes scholarships at Oxford.</p>

1902. Henri Poincaré: <i>La Science et l'Hypothèse</i> .	1902-13. Benedetto Croce: <i>Filosofia dello Spirito</i> . Gissing: <i>Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft</i> . G. B. Shaw: <i>Man and Superman</i> . Samuel Butler: <i>The Way of all Flesh</i> . Syngé: <i>In the Shadow of the Glen</i> . Riders to the Sea. 1903. Grazia Deledda: <i>Genere</i> . Giovanni Cena: <i>Gli Ammonitori</i> . Pascoli: <i>Canti di Castelvecchio</i> . Blasco Ibañez: <i>La Catedral</i> . Chehov: <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> . 1903-12. D'Annunzio: <i>Laudi</i> .	The Académie Goncourt begins its sessions. Motor-cars become general.
1904. Tancrède de Visan: <i>Paysages Introspectifs</i> . Fernand Gregh: <i>Les Clartés—Humaines</i> . Bourget: <i>Un Divorce</i> .	1904. G. B. Shaw: <i>John Bull's Other Island</i> . Barrie: <i>Peter Pan</i> . Pío Baroja: <i>La Vida fantástica</i> . Blasco Ibañez: <i>El Intruso</i> . H. G. Wells: <i>Kipps</i> . Freussen: <i>Hulligntei</i> . De Amicis: <i>L'Idioma Gentile</i> .	War breaks out between Russia and Japan. Suppression of <i>congreganiste</i> teaching in France. Entente Cordiale between Great Britain and France. Opening of Abbey Theatre in Dublin.
1904-8. Verhaeren: <i>Toute la Flandre</i> . 1904-12. Romain Rolland: <i>Jean Christophe in the Cahiers de la Quinzaine</i> . 1905. Charles Maurras founds <i>L'Action française</i> . Barrès: <i>Au Service de l'Allemagne</i> . Claudel: <i>Partage de Midi</i> . Péguy: <i>Notre Patrie</i> . Verhaeren: <i>Les Heures d'Après-midi</i> . Henri-Martin Barzun: <i>Poème de l'Homme</i> . Valentine de Saint-Point: <i>Poèmes de la Mer et du Soleil</i> . 1906. Verhaeren: <i>La Multiple Splendeur</i> . Jammes: <i>Clairières dans le Ciel</i> . Barzun: <i>Chant de l'Idée</i> . Pierre Loti: <i>Les Désenchantés</i> . Pierre Milleville: <i>Sur la vaste terre</i> . Comtesse de Noailles: <i>Eblouissements</i> . 1907. Claudel: <i>Art Poétique</i> . " <i>Connaissance de l'Est</i> . René Bazin: <i>Le bien qui lève</i> . Emile Moselly: <i>Terres Lorraines</i> . Bergson: <i>L'Evolution Créatrice</i> .	William II lands at Tangier and brings about the Moroccan crisis. Piercing of Simpion Tunnel completed. Dreyfus rehabilitated. Separation Law of Church and State in France. Einstein formulates a special theory of relativity. Richard Strauss' opera <i>Salomé</i> . Algeciras Conference. 1906-14. The Russian Duma. Second Hague Conference. Triple Entente between France, Russia, and Great Britain. Pius X denounces Modernism. The "Grand Guignol" first visits London.	

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY—continued

FRENCH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT	OTHER LITERATURES	LANDMARKS IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
<p>THE NEW IDEALISM AND THE NEW 1908. Paul Fort : <i>Ile de France</i> (Ballades IXe série). Vørhaeren : <i>Les Visages de la Vie</i>. Valentine de Saint-Point : <i>Poèmes d'Or-guel</i>. Jules Romains : <i>La Vie Secrète</i>. Éstaunnié : <i>La Vie Secrète</i>. Anatole France : <i>Vie de Jeanne d'Arc</i>. Maurice Barrès : <i>Colette Baudouche</i>. Henri Bordeaux : <i>La Croisée des Chemins</i>. André Gide : <i>La Poêle droite</i>. Marinetti : <i>Le Futurisme</i> (Vigaro, 21 fév.).</p>	<p>REALISM—continued. Arnold Bennett : <i>The Old Wives' Tale</i>. Francis Thompson : <i>The Hound of Heaven</i>. Blasco Ibañez : <i>Sangre y Arena</i>. Ricardo León : <i>Castia de Hídalgo</i>. Jacinto Benavente : <i>Rosas de Otoño</i>.</p>	<p><i>Annus mirabilis</i> of the conquest of the air : exploits of Farman, Orville, and Wilbur Wright. Lord Northcliffe takes financial control of <i>The Times</i>.</p>
<p>1909. Rostand : <i>Chantrelor</i>. Marie Lenéru : <i>Les Afranchis</i>. Émile Nolly : <i>La Baraque animamite</i>. Marguerite Audoux : <i>Marie-Claire</i>. Charles-Louis Philippe : <i>Dans la petite ville</i>. Jules Romains : <i>Un être en marche</i>. Charles Péguy : <i>Notre Jeunesse</i>. " <i>Le Mystère de la Charité de Jeanne d'Arc</i>. Vidrac : <i>Liure d'Amour</i>. Cludel : <i>Cinq grandes Odes suivies d'un Professionnal pour saluer le Siècle nouveau</i>. Clandel : <i>L'Amour faite à Marc</i>. André Gide : <i>Isabelle</i>. Jérôme et Jean Tharaud : <i>La Maîtresse servante</i>.</p>	<p>Kipling : <i>Actions and Reactions</i>. H. G. Wells : <i>Tono-Lungay</i>. James Stephens : <i>Insurrections</i>. Pérez Galdos : <i>L'España trágica</i>. Andriev : <i>The Seven that were Hanged</i>. Hardy : <i>The Dynasts</i> (complete edition). Galsworthy : <i>Justice</i>. John Mascheld : <i>Ballads and Poems</i>.</p>	<p>Peary reaches the North Pole. Germany recognizes French sphere of influence in Morocco. Bleriot crosses the Channel in an aeroplane. Accession of George V. Foundation of British Academy with Lord Morley as President. The cinematograph first becomes popular.</p>
<p>1911. The Académie française makes the first award of its Grand Prix de Littérature to André Lafon's <i>Elève Gille</i>. Anatole France : <i>Les Dieux ont Soif</i>.</p>	<p>H. G. Wells : <i>The New Machiavelli</i>. Arnold Bennett : <i>Hilda Lessways</i>. Rupert Brooke : <i>Poems</i>.</p>	<p>Amundsen reaches the South Pole. The Agadir incident.</p>
<p>1912.</p>	<p>H. G. Wells : <i>Marriage</i>. Hugh Walpole : <i>Prelude to Adventure</i>. First Book of Georgian Poetry. Walter de la Mare : <i>The Listeners</i>. James Stephens : <i>The Hill of Vision</i>.</p>	<p>1911-12. Tripolitan War between Italy and Turkey. The Sultan of Morocco submits to a French Protectorate. Captain Scott and his companions reach the South Pole and perish on their homeward journey.</p>

1912. Emile Nolly : *Gens de Guerre au Maroc*.  
 Pierre Mille : *Louise et Barnavaux*.  
 J. et J. Tharaud : *La Fête Arabe*.  
 Péguy : *La Tabisserie de Ste. Geneviève et de Jeanne d'Arc*.  
 Paul Fort elected "Prince des Poètes."  
 Marie Lenéru : *Le Redoutable*.
1913. Jacques Copeau founds the "Théâtre du Vieux Colombier."  
 Péguy : *La Tabisserie de Notre-Dame*.  
 Maurice Barrès : *La Colline inspirée*.  
 Psychari : *L'Appel des Armes*.  
 Emile Clermont : *Laure*.  
 Charles-Louis Philippe : *Charles Blanchard*.  
 Alain Fournier : *Le Grand Meaulnes*.  
 Henry Daguerches : *Le Kilomètre 83*.
1914. Marcel Proust : *Du Côté de chez Swann*.  
 André Gide : *Les Caves du Vatican*.  
 Estounié : *Les Choses voient*.  
 Paul Bourget : *Le Démon du Midi*.  
 Anatole France : *La Révolte des Anges*.
- D'Annunzio : *La Contemplazione della Morte*.  
 Vittoria Aganoor : *Poesie Complete*.  
 Pio Baroja : *El arbol de la ciencia*.
- Hugh Walpole : *Fortitude*.  
 Compton Mackenzie : *Sinister Street*.  
 Conrad : *Chance*.  
 Maschfield : *Dauber*.  
 Flecker : *The Golden Journey to Samarcand*.  
 Alice Meynell : *Collected Poems*.  
 A. E. (George Russell) : *Collected Poems*.  
 Benedetto Croce : *Estetica*.  
 Francesco Chiesa : *Istorie e favole*.  
 Papini : *Un Uomo finito*.  
 G. K. Chesterton : *The Flying Inn*.  
 Hardy : *Satires of Circumstance*.
1914. Salvatore di Giacomo : *Novelle Napolitane* (collected).
- Loss of the *Titanic*.  
 Cult of the Russian ballet at its height.
- 1912-13. The Balkan War.  
 Poincaré seventh President of French Republic.
- Assassination of Archduke Francis-Ferdinand.  
 Outbreak of World War.  
 Completion of Panama Canal.





## APPENDIX B

### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHIES

#### A. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY GENERALLY

##### I. SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- F. S. MARVIN: *The Century of Hope. A Sketch of Western Progress from 1815 to 1914.* (Clarendon Press, 1919.)
- LANSON ET DESSEIGNET: *La France et sa Civilisation de 1789 à nos jours.* (Harrap, 1922.)
- A. GUÉRARD: *French Civilisation in the Nineteenth Century.* (Fisher Unwin, 1914.)
- A. RAMBAUD: *Histoire de la Civilisation Contemporaine en France, 1789-1912.* (Colin, 1919.)
- G. RENARD: *Les Etapes de la Société française au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* (1913.)
- A. TILLEY, ed. *Modern France.* (C.U.P., 1922.)
- LOWES DICKENSON: *Action and Reaction in Modern France.* (George Allen, 1892.)
- A. P. GOOCH: *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century.* (Longmans Green, 1913.)
- FAGUET: *Politiques et Moralistes*, 3 vols.  
— *Etudes sur la Littérature française du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.*
- STROWSKI: *Tableau de la Littérature française au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* (Delaplane.)
- GEORGES PELLISSIER: *Le Mouvement Littéraire au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* (Hachette, 1893.)
- RENÉ CANAT: *La Littérature française au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* Vol. I, 1800-52; Vol. II, 1852-1900. (Payot.)
- BRUNETIÈRE: *L'Evolution de la Poésie Lyrique au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, 2 vols. (Hachette, 1893-4.)
- D'AVENEL: *Histoire de la Presse française depuis 1789.* (1900.)

## II. BIBLIOGRAPHY

H. P. THIEME: *Guide Bibliographique de la Littérature française de 1800 à 1906.* (Welter, Paris, 1907.)

## III. ANTHOLOGIES WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES

CHARLES LE GOFFIC: *La Littérature française au XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> Siècles; Tableau général accompagné de pages-types.* (Larousse, 1919.)

GAUTHIER-FERRIÈRES: *Anthologie des Ecrivains français du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle; Prose, 2 vols.; Poésie, 2 vols.* (Larousse.)

AUGUSTE AUZAS: *Les Poètes français du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle 1800-1885.* (Clarendon Press, 1914.)

CHARLES BONNIER: *La Lignée des Poètes au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* (Clarendon Press, 1902.)

F. Y. ECCLES: *A Century of French Verse.* (Constable, 1909.)

VIAL ET DENISE: *Idées et Doctrines Littéraires du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* (Colin, 1918.)

BAYET ET ALBERT: *Ecrivains politiques du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* (Colin, 1907.)

JULLIAN: *Extraits des Historiens du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle.* (Hachette.)

## B. THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

## I. SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY READING

FINCH AND PEERS: *The Origins of French Romanticism.* (1920.)

PIERRE LASERRE: *Le Romantisme français.* (Mercure de France, 1907.)

G. BRANDES: *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature.* Vols. III and V. (Heinemann, 1904.)

C. M. DES GRANGES: *La Presse Littéraire sous la Restauration 1815-1830.* (Mercure de France, 1917.)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER: *Histoire de Romantisme.* (1874.)

J. MARSAN: *La Bataille Romantique.* (Hachette, 1912.)

LEBRETON: *Le Théâtre Romantique.* (Boivin, 1923.)

M. SOURIAU: *La Préface de Cromwell.* (Lecène Oudin et Cie.)

- POTÉZ : *L'Elégie en France avant le Romantisme*. (Calmann Lévy, 1898.)
- L. MAIGRON : *Le Roman Historique à l'époque romantique*. (Champion, 1912.)
- MADAME DUCLAUX : *Victor Hugo*. (Constable, 1921.)

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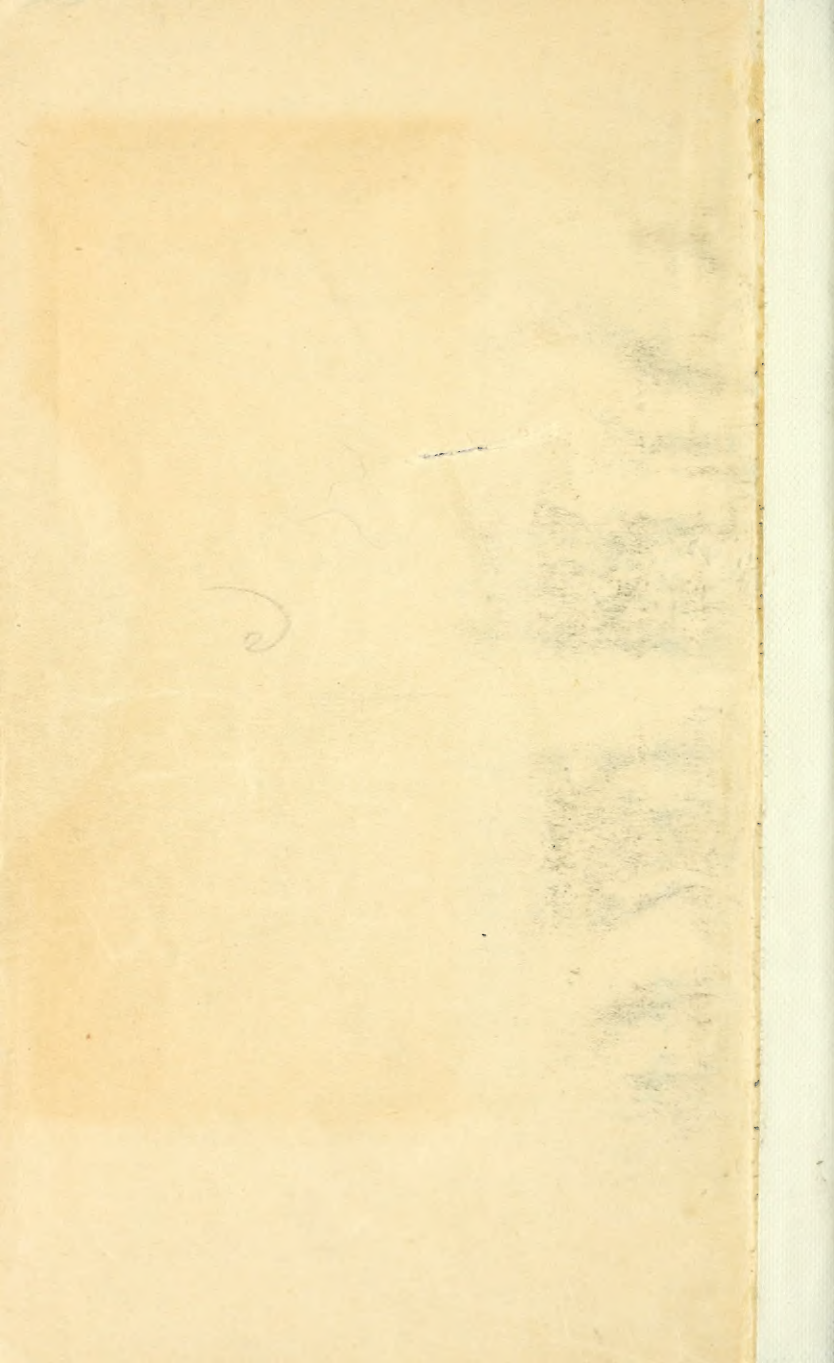
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